ALFRED

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HITCHCOCK'S

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NEW stories presented by the master of **SUSPENSE**

Dear Readers,

Caricature is derived from the French, and it means to get at the truth of an individual's appearance by means of outright lies. You are now prepared to take a look at the cover of this issue. There you shall see delineated an anonymous prince of the Renaissance period, sensitively rendered by some old master or other.

I trust you will all be sufficiently acute to notice that our pages this month are heavily larded with the light touch. Silky Collins, as nice a crook as you would want to meet in a dark alley, is back. Fortunately, his misadventure in February did not dampen his pleasantly evil spirit. This time, he finds an angle—a ninety degree angle, I presume—on some squares. Another light drama has a most ponderous theme. It insists and proves that murders are such a nuisance, they should really not be committed—no matter how pressing the need. Is it any wonder that this fine publication has been hailed as reading matter for all the family?

Having just completed one fine motion picture and since I am about to start on another, I must close. Affectionately and shudderingly—

Alfred Hitchcock

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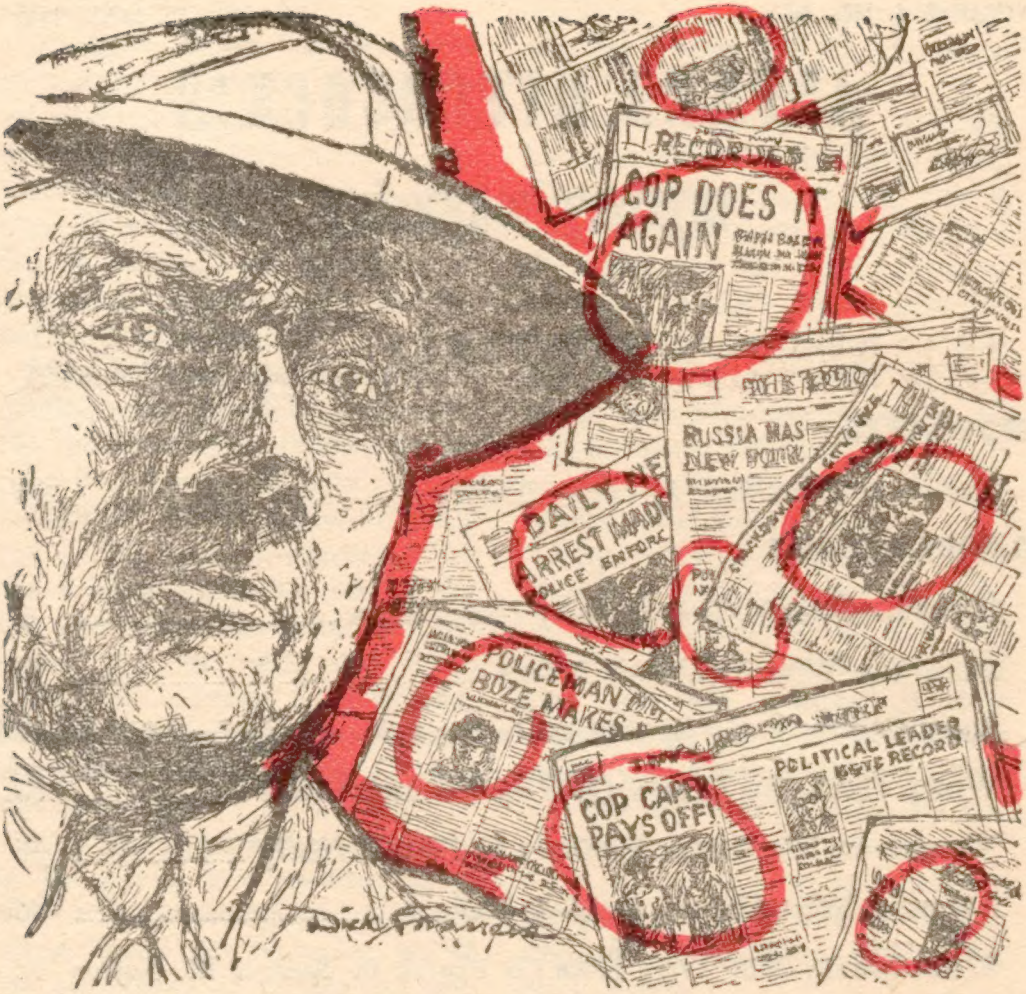


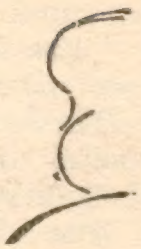
by Henry Slesar

As a patrolman, Jake Boze had the knack of getting his name in the paper. ("Just spell it right," he used to say to the grinning reporters, "Boze, with a z.") But when the inevitable happened, and Jake's hotshot record earned him the rank of Detective, something happened. Nobody complained about it, and nobody blamed it on Jake, but his name stopped appearing, and the promise he had shown just didn't get fulfilled. Nobody complained about it, but Jake Boze felt what was going on, deeply and painfully like the old gunwound in his left thigh.

Once, he took his grievance to the desk of Captain Eastman, but Eastman's head was filled with department troubles.

"What do you want from me, Boze?" he said. "I can't feed you juicy cases all the time. You just

The detective's lot is not a happy one. To get his picture in the paper, he must solve a perfect crime—an impossibility—or commit an imperfect one—a somewhat more reasonable objective. I forthwith give you Jake Boze, a man to be watched—all the time.



HOMICIDE ONLY KNOCKS ONCE

do your job; the glory'll come."

"But I never catch anything big," Jake said, his voice thin and whiny, emerging strangely from his big, beefy body. "All this piddling stuff I get. Why can't I be assigned to a homicide now and then?"

"Don't be so anxious. You got plenty of time to make a rep; it doesn't happen overnight."

Jake sulked, and the Captain frowned in a big-brother way and leaned forward.

"Jake," he said, "I'm going to tell you something for your own good. You were one of the best patrolmen on the force, and I give you credit for it. But now you're over your head a little, Jake. This homicide stuff, this is a brain job. Detection's a science these days. It's not your footwork or your gunplay that counts there. It's this" He tapped his forehead significantly.

"I never had the chance," Jake grumbled. "I read all the manuals. All I need is the break."

Eastman sighed, and made a tentative promise. But six months later, there were still no news stories about Detective Jake Boze.

It was at the end of an unseasonably cool summer, a period when the crime rate took a surprising dip, that fate put the opportunity squarely in front of Jake's craggy nose. Having made few friends among the plainclothesmen, he still chummed around with Sergeant Goldman of the 34th Precinct, and he was accompanying Goldman on the officer's "see" in an RPM car. They were chatting like the old friends they were, with Goldman doing the listening and Jake doing the complaining, when they heard the shortwave message about the disturbance of East 83rd Street. Someone had reported the sound of gunfire; it was only three short blocks from where they were, and Jake, feeling like

a patrolman once again, said: "What do you say, Phil? Let's you and me check this out."

The Sergeant looked at him, and smiled understandingly. "Sure, Jake, let's do that."

The address turned out to be one of the glittering cement cliffs that bordered the East River, an apartment house plush enough to employ two doormen and two elevator operators. It was one of the latter who had heard what he thought were shots, only minutes before, on the penthouse of the building. Jake asked Goldman if he could handle the squeal, and the Sergeant agreed. He took the elevator to the top floor, and then told the elevator boy to go back downstairs.

He wasn't overly impressed by the posh layout of the rooftop apartment; he'd seen fancier places in his career. But when he took a look at the small brass plaque on the door that identified the tenant, he gave a short, silent whistle. It said: THORNTON J. KELLY. And Thornton J. Kelly was a walking slice of the First National, a man who had made enough money to lose interest in it, and who was now well embarked upon a political career.

Jake tried the doorknob of the front entrance. It was unlatched.

He walked into darkness, and knew that the squeal had to be taken seriously. A darkened apartment, and an unlocked front door, added up to the unusual. He found a light switch and flicked it upwards.

He found the woman midway between the living room and the bedroom. She must have been trying to get away from her assailant when the bullet caught her at the base of the spine. Jake bent over her and corrected the impression. Not one bullet. Three. She was a stout, matronly type, and the sheer negligee she wore seemed incongruous on her fleshy body. Her face, pressed against the thick nap of hallway carpet, was grotesquely distorted. She was no beauty, that was for sure. Jake looked at her, and wondered how Thornton Kelly, with his smooth good looks and all the attributes of money and power, could have such a homely wife. But she was his wife, all right, there was no doubt of that. And there was no doubt of another thing. She was dead.

Even in Jake's busy career as a footslogger, there hadn't been a case with such spectacular promise. Thornton Kelly's wife! He could hear the excited babble of the reporters' voices already, picture his grim, face on the front page...

He got to his feet and went into the bedroom. It was a room in wild disorder, a stage setting for human violence... He paused in front of the only closed door, and listened alertly when he heard a sound that didn't belong in a dead woman's apartment. It was the

sound of breathing. No doubt of it.

Carefully, he drew out his service revolver. Then he yanked at the knob and flung the door open. It was a bathroom, pink-tiled from floor to ceiling, and the quaking figure of the man who faced him was complete with guilty expression and the murder weapon.

"Please," the man blubbered inanely. "Please, please, please..."

"All right, put it down," Jake said calmly. The automatic dropped to the floor. "Now empty those pockets," Jake said, and watched as the man lifted gaudy strands of jewelry out and let them trickle in a sparkling shower from his fingertips. Jake picked up everything, taking special care in the handling of the gun.

"Got greedy, huh?" he grunted. "Couldn't make your getaway without getting what you came for..."

"I didn't mean it," the man sobbed. "So help me, I didn't..."

"Sure, it was an accident," Jake said roughly. He backed up and found the tiny knurled knob of a table lamp. He knocked back the shade to spotlight the man, and took a long look. He was a man of medium height, with a lined, worried face and prominent teeth. He wore a neat gray suit, and a cap with a leather visor. "What are you, chauffeur or something?"

"Cab driver," the man gulped.

"What's your name?"

"Briggs. Harry Briggs."

"You broke in to get this jewelry, huh?"

The man swallowed again. "Y-yes. I didn't think anybody was here. I thought I could just take a few things and leave. When she saw me, she started to yell, so I—" He covered his face with his hands. "You got to give me a break! I got trouble, family trouble. My wife's sick. I never would have done it if it wasn't for that—"

He went on talking, pleading. He didn't have anything new or original to say, but that didn't matter. Jake Boze wasn't listening. Jake Boze was just standing there, his gun poised, his mind working. He was thinking about something far more important than the quivering cab driver with his tale of woe, or the fat old matron lying dead and cooling on the carpet of the penthouse floor. He was thinking about different times when a discovery like this would have earned him all the glory and public attention he craved. But now things were different; now he hungered for a different kind of reputation...

"Please, mister, please," Harry Briggs was saying.

"Shut up!"

Jake looked around him, and then seated himself on a small, blue-velvet chair. He waved the gun at Briggs and said: "Sit down."

Briggs sat, and Jake watched

him, almost with detachment, his mind still occupied with the fascinating idea which had occurred to him.

"You say your wife's sick?" he asked, conversationally.

"I told you—"

"And that's why you tried to rob the place, right? Because you needed the dough?"

"Yes."

"Suppose I did give you a break," Jake said. "Would you be interested in a proposition?"

The man made a noise in his throat, his face lighting with hope.

"Don't get excited," Jake said gruffly. "I'm not going to let you off. I'm a cop; I can't let you get away with murder. What I'm talking about is money. That's what you were after, right?"

Briggs nodded dumbly.

"Suppose I let you finish the job you started. Suppose I let you make a nice haul out of the old lady's jewelry. That should help your family out, shouldn't it?"

"I—I don't get it."

"I'm thinking about letting you go," Jake said calmly. "Just for a few hours. So you can take the jewelry and sell it. So you can leave your wife well fixed when I come and get you later."

"Later?"

"Yeah, later." He looked at his watch "It's just a little after midnight. I'm going to pick you up in twenty-four hours—well, let's say eight o'clock tomorrow morning —and you better not try and get away. I'll have you spotted every minute, and the first wrong move you make, I'll stomp you so fast you won't know what happened. And I'll see to it that we recover every nickel, so your wife can't spend it. Understand?"

Briggs, his mouth open, looked incredulous. Jake stood up and came to his side, his hand extended. "Give me your wallet," he said. The killer obeyed, and the detective yanked out every identifying card, leaving only a few single dollar bills behind. Then he handed it back.

"But why?" the cabdriver said. "Why are you doing this?"

"Maybe I'm just a nice guy," Jake Boze said "Now let's talk it over once more, so we understand each other. And then let's get you out of the building before someone gets suspicious." He bent down and put his face close to the pale features of his captive. "And don't forget, Briggs. You got twenty-four hours of freedom, but then I'm nailing you. Get that straight."

"Yes," Briggs said. "I got it."

Ten minutes later, alone in the penthouse apartment, Jake Boze picked up the telephone. He dialed the precinct number, and said:

"Mitchell? This is Lieutenant Boze. Better get the boys over to 450 East 83rd, the penthouse apartment. There's been a murder."

It was good feeling the glow of the spotlight again; Jake had almost forgotten how much pleasant warmth could be generated by the inquisitive faces of the press, by the hot flash of camera bulbs. Even the warning eyes of Captain Eastman, cautioning him not to say too much, didn't spoil the good feeling in Jake's big body.

"All right, boys, lay off," Eastman grumbled. "We told you everything we know. Mrs. Kelly was last seen alive at ten P.M., by a delivery boy from the liquor shop. She was discovered at midnight by Lieutenant Boze here after a gunshot was reported by one of the elevator men; the murder weapon was a .45 automatic. Her jewelry was snatched, so it looks like robbery was the motive. Thornton Kelly is flying back East tonight, so you'll have to wait for more details. Let's call it a day, huh?"

But the pressmen were reluctant; the story was front-page worthy, and they expected more than the standard homicide bulletin. They looked towards Jake Boze, and Jake said:

"Okay, boys, I'll give you a statement."

Eastman looked at him sharply, but Jake didn't care.

"You can put this in your paper," he said, moistening his lips for the cameras. "I'm going to deliver the murderer by tomorrow morning, by eight o'clock tomorrow morning."

If Jake had yanked out his service revolver and fired it into the crowd, he couldn't have produced a more excited reaction. The hullabaloo that followed, mercifully drowned out Eastman's own explosion; the police Captain sputtered helplessly, his enraged shouts unheard. He tried to draw Jake Boze away, but he wasn't strong enough to win a tug-of-war against half a dozen dedicated reporters. But Jake, grinning, pulled free of them, following the Captain through the gauntlet and out into the street where the patrol car waited.

He knew he would be facing Eastman's wrath when they were alone in the back seat, but Jake didn't mind. The moment had been worth it. And there was still a better moment to come...

"That's the craziest stunt I ever saw!" the Captain erupted. "You've got a hell of a nerve, Boze!"

"Take it easy, Captain," Jake smiled. "I know what I'm doing."

"I ought to break you for this! I ought to make you turn in your badge."

"That wouldn't look so good, would it? After I promised to get the old lady's killer?"

Eastman couldn't find the words to express his indignation. He let the fire cool, and started to groan.

"Don't you see what you did? You've set up the whole department as a patsy for the newspapers! Kelly's a big man, you know

that. They'll be riding this story for every lousy nickel they can get out of their readers. And you had to go and make a damn fool statement like that! What got *into* you, Jake?"

"How do you know I can't do it, Captain? I've been a cop for a long time. Maybe I *can* deliver the murderer. Ever think of that?"

"All right, so maybe we'll be lucky. But then, maybe we won't. A case like this can drag on for months before we get a break. You just can't make promises!"

"But I did, Captain." Jake settled comfortably in the seat. "You might as well face it."

Eastman moaned and covered his eyes.

"Eight o'clock tomorrow," he muttered. "What did I ever do to deserve this?"

Jake was still feeling elated when his off-duty hours arrived. Before returning to his apartment, he stopped at the newsstand to pick up the late edition, and found his own face looking back at him from the corner of the front pages. He liked the way he looked, and he liked what they said about him.

In the apartment, he picked up the phone and called Harry Briggs.

A woman with a tired voice answered. For a second, he felt a stinging moment of doubt. But then Briggs got on the other end.

"This is Lieutenant Boze. Just wanted to see how everything was."

"All right," Briggs said, in a hollow whisper. "I'm ready anytime you say."

"I'll be there in the morning. Only I want to return something to you tonight. Your gun. I want you to keep it someplace handy in the apartment, somewhere that I can lay my hands on it in a hurry."

"I don't understand."

"Never mind understanding. I'll meet you tonight and give it to you. I want to be able to find it lying around. You got the money, didn't you? For the jewelry?"

"Yes, I got it."

"I'll meet you someplace near your house. Neighborhood tavern or something. You got one of those?"

"Yeah. Corner of St. Joseph's."

"Okay, I'll be there at ten. And Briggs—"

"Yeah?"

"Don't forget. You never saw me before, and I never saw you. And have that gun available tomorrow —put it in the top drawer of your bedroom bureau, where I can lay my hands on it right away. And don't try and get cute. You do and I'll not only pin the rap on you anyway, but I'll see to it that your wife doesn't get a dime of that money. Understand me?"

"I understand, Lieutenant."

"Fine," Jake said cheerfully, and hung up.

That night, Jake's sleep was sweet; he didn't need any pink dream sequences to make him feel happy. He woke up refreshed and hungry, and scrambled himself five eggs before his appetite was satisfied. He looked up at the kitchen clock as he finished his meal. It was six-thirty. Another hour and a half, and he'd have to answer for his prediction. He was ready.

He shaved carefully, and used an excess of talc to dim the shine. He put on his best blue suit, a fresh shirt, and the tie that Captain Eastman had given him last Christmas. He wanted to look good in the photos that were sure to be taken.

Then he went downtown.

Sure enough, the reporters were out in force, and he could tell from their jocular greetings that they didn't expect him to make good. He grinned and waved at them familiarly, but he kept his mouth shut when they asked for a statement. Then he walked into Eastman's office.

"Surprised you had the nerve to show up today," Eastman grunted. "There's a whole crew out there, waiting for us to fall on our face."

"I saw 'em," Jake said easily. "But we won't disappoint them, Captain. I know who killed Thornton Kelly's wife."

"Now, look Jake—"

"I tell you I *know*. It was a cabdriver, name of Harry Briggs. He lives in the Bronx; I got the address right in my pocket. Order us a squad car, and we'll go pick him up."

"Cabdriver? How do you know?"

"Take my word for it, Captain, this is the boy. We practically got him with the meat in his mouth. I wouldn't be surprised if we even found the murder weapon at his place."

Eastman was shaking his head. "I don't get it, Jake. What makes you think he's the one? Where's your proof?"

"Call it a tipoff. Call it anything you want, Captain. But what's the difference? I can bring you the killer, all in a nice tidy package, and that's what matters. Right?"

"Okay," Eastman sighed. "You're directing this funeral, Jake. I just hope you don't bury the whole department."

He picked up the telephone.

There were four of them in the RPM car, Jake Boze, Captain Eastman, Officers Mitchell and Hogan. But there were more than four who pulled up in front of the Bronx brownstone where Harry Briggs lived with his ailing wife. A fleet of taxis, bearing reporters as eager as a wolf pack, had been on their trail all during the trip uptown, and there was nothing the police could do but tell them to keep their distance.

Jake Boze rapped on the apartment door, and a woman in an oriental-style housecoat answered. She was pale and baggy-eyed; she looked sick, all right, but Jake suspected that the ailment had alcoholic symptoms. He took off his hat, and announced himself. She backed off, clutching her robe, and Harry Briggs himself stepped forth to meet his fate.

"Harry Briggs?" Jake said crisply. "I'm Lieutenant Boze of homicide. I'm placing you under arrest; the charge is suspicion of murder—"

Briggs, his mouth tremulous, said nothing.

"It's my duty to warn you," Jake said professionally, "that anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence against you. Now will you permit a search of your home, or do we have to get a warrant?" He was tempted to drop a wink in Briggs' direction, but he didn't. Briggs only nodded, stupidly, and Jake marched past him into the bedroom, with Officer Mitchell at his heels.

Jake took his time about getting to the right drawer in the right piece of furniture; he had to make it look good, especially with Mitchell's wide eyes on him. He stretched out the search, flung open closet doors, upset wastebaskets, and then finally slid open the bottom drawer of the walnut bureau, reaching for the automatic which had ended the life of Mrs. Thornton Kelly. It wasn't there.

He didn't get panicky for another five busy minutes. He kept on scrounging around the miscellaneous objects in the drawer, and then started a thorough search of the rest of the bureau. But even as he searched, he knew he'd been double-crossed. The weapon was gone.

He came out into the living room, his face livid.

"All right, Briggs! Where's the gun? What'd you do with it?"

"Gun?" Briggs said innocently. "I don't know what you're talking about—"

"Where is it?"

"But I don't have any gun. I *never* had no gun."

Jake went for him—like a cougar, his hands claws around the man's throat. He wasn't even aware that Eastman was trying to pull him off his victim; he was too intent on his purpose, too filled with rage at his betrayal. "Where is it?" he shouted. "What did you do with it?"

"Boze!" Eastman yelled. "Let him go!"

"You won't get away with it! I told you—"

"Say, Captain—" It was Hogan, the patrolman, beckoning from the doorway. "Can I see you a minute?"

"What is it?" Eastman snapped.

"Listen, one of the reporter guys got hold of Thornton Kelly. He's got him downstairs—"

"So what?"

The patrolman leaned forward, and said something in Eastman's ear. The Captain paled, and then said:

"Okay, send him up."

Jake didn't get another crack at Briggs. Eastman kept them apart until Hogan returned, bringing with him a suntanned, heavyset man in a camel's hair coat. It wasn't hard to recognize Thornton Kelly; he'd had his picture in the papers far more often than Jake Boze.

Eastman said: "Mr. Kelly? Someone told me you know this man, Harry Briggs."

"Yes," Kelly said, "I know this man."

"Can you tell us how?"

"He's a cabdriver. He's picked me up in front of my apartment house many times. I'm sort of a regular customer."

"He killed your wife," Boze said dully. "This is the guy who did it, Mr. Kelly."

Thornton Kelly blinked, and then reached into his pocket and brought forth a thin gold cigarette case.

"But that's impossible," he said.

"Impossible?" Jake exploded. "But it's *true!*"

"I'm afraid you're mistaken, Lieutenant." Kelly fitted a cigarette into a black holder. "This man couldn't have killed my wife. The last time she was seen alive was ten o'clock, wasn't it? And her body was discovered around midnight?"

"Yes."

"Well, Briggs was with me from nine until well past midnight. He drove me around town until ten, and then took me out to the International Airport. He couldn't possibly have been anywhere near the apartment house. So you see?" He shrugged, delicately; there were no alternatives.

Jake Boze stared and said nothing. He looked at the smoke curling in front of the man's suntanned face, and then looked at the relieved eyes and small, satisfied smile on Harry Briggs' face. He looked back and forth between them, and knew for the first time that robbery hadn't been the real motive for Mrs. Thornton Kelly's death. He knew, but he could say nothing, unless he wanted the story of his own scheming to come to light...

"I'm sorry," Jake said hoarsely. "I made a mistake. A bad mistake."

And he went outside to face the reporters. The picture of him in the afternoon editions wasn't flattering.

BLOOD RED WINE

by Donald Martin

A friend who is inebriated is an inebriated friend indeed. He will fairly swarm over you with a revolting display of affection. But since friendship is as friendship does, one should lend a hand at such a time—and an ear. Be prepared, however, never to have them returned.

IT BEGAN that morning when he woke up and saw Tommy's face in the clock. He lay on his side in bed staring at the small round interminably ticking clock for a long time and then the face went away and he got out of bed and got dressed. Leaving the room with his comb in his hand, he looked back over his shoulder at the clock to make sure the face had not come back. He stood in front of the mirror in the bathroom, very carefully combing his hair, still unused to the gray traces there, and found himself peering into his own face. His comb stopped in mid-stroke as he felt Tommy's likeness drift between flesh and glass like a wraith and then go away; and then the comb moved again and his eyes became again relatively unseeing and indifferent.

He did not think about his breakfast, but went about its preparation with a sort of automation that suggested hypnosis, and he ate slowly and quietly, not tasting the food, his eyes staring vacantly. He left the dishes on the table and put on his cap and jacket and went downstairs, his feet clumping evenly on the bare wooden stairs. He stood in the doorway, his hands in his pockets, his jacket spread back over his white shirt. He stared into the sunlight, watching the drift of traffic and people, the mothers steering baby carriages, the old women swaying with bulging shopping bags. It was warm, the sun very bright, glaring on the stained concrete.

There was about him a restive tenseness, a vague uncertainty. Finally, he began walking, away, it seemed, instead of towards. He walked a block and then another and turned in through an open door and into a place at once subdued, the sun glare gone, the morning gone, a sudden harsh twilight fallen around him, and it was a relief.

The bartender looked up and then closed his newspaper with a slight rustle and slipped it as if to an invisible hand under the bar and walked towards where Nick had sat down. The bartender's face was very sober, grave.

"The cops were around again," the bartender said. He poised one foot upon the sink under the bar and looked towards the outside.

"Again?"

"About an hour ago."

"What did they want?"

"The same things. Who were his friends, who were his enemies, this and that."

"They came to me last night."

"You were his best friend."

"I told them he didn't have enemies. I knew him for twenty years. More than twenty years. We were kids together."

"He must have had enemies. One anyway, for sure."

"Yes, one."

The bartender's tone grew intimate, confidential; the outside

faded, became still, as if carried off with a wind, and the voice came quietly across to him.

"Who do you think it was, Nick?"

He looked at the bartender's eyes: brown eyes. *I have been coming in here for eighteen years and he has been behind the stick for five years at least and suddenly I see that he has brown eyes.* An eagerness in the brownness, a quest, a sly innuendo in the shrewd little shift of the eyebrows. As if the eyes are saying, Tell me the truth that I already know, just let me hear it.

"He was my best friend," Nick said.

"I know."

"But he drank too much"

"That no good red wine."

"And when his belly got too hot..."

"I know. I remember a couple times in here. Once the backbar mirror, another time smashing up the door."

"It could have been anyone. A man with a bellyful of red wine doesn't need enemies. All he needs is himself."

The bartender took his foot down. "Yes," he said. "He was in here that night, had a couple of glasses. More than a couple. He was ready when he left. He was ready for what happened."

"Do they know anything yet?"

"I don't know," the bartender said. "They're not going to tell me if they do. What the hell do you suppose he was doing in the schoolyard at that time of night?"

"He did funny things when he got like that."

"The way I figure it," the bartender said, and Nick's eyes lifted to his face with a great careful interest, wary and prepared, "is that he went in there to sleep it off and there was somebody there—maybe a guy and a girl—and they had an argument and a fight and that was what did it."

"It was a fractured skull."

"Sure. He hit that concrete yard."

"Probably," Nick said, his eyes falling, staring somberly at the circle stains that seemed ingrained upon the mahogany bar.

"Tommy DeAngelo," the bartender mused in summary, a bit wistful, a bit ironic.

They were silent. The outside began again, the interminable murmur of voices and passing people and cars.

He went out and began walking once more, one foot reaching slowly after the other, measuring. His face was tight with concern, his mouth pressed into a lipless line. Somebody said in a quiet passing voice, "Hello Nick," and he nodded, did not look, kept walking, his eyes mesmerized by the sidewalk. And then next to him, with a suddenness as though unveiled by a swift knife-stroke, the schoolyard, broad, empty,

bright now, the long handball court like a mammouth monument. His face lifted, seeing, staring at the great, brooding yard. The huge, many-windowed red brick school rose behind the yard. He passed close along the tall, barbed-wire topped fence, watching the silent, empty yard that seemed to be retaining its air of death.

The police had asked, "Did he have a bad temper?"

He did not have a good temper.

Nick tried to walk lightly until the schoolyard passed from view, self-conscious of his feet, of the soft tapping sounds his work-worn shoes made on the concrete.

Tommy had said, "I don't want to go home, Nick." And he had said, "Well what are you going to do? The bars are closed and you can't stand up straight."

He had followed Tommy, walking with an impatient loyalty. Tommy swayed and lurched, his drunkenness sometimes hurling him at flopping angles across the sidewalks.

Nick followed behind, waiting for Tommy to complete one of his flopping pitchings, but it were as though protective phantom hands floated around him, for he did not go down. He reeled at the corner and it made him change his direction and he went up the school block. He reeled against the fence and when he came to the open gate he reeled again and the fence was not there and he hit the ground soundlessly. He made a scuffling noise as he got to his feet, and went into the deep black vacancy of the yard, muttering curses.

"Hey, Tommy," Nick said, going after him. Tommy found the stoop in front of one of the rear exits and sat down on the steps, his head falling forward, bobbing up, dropping again, like the head of a puppet.

Nick stood before him, feeling self-conscious, looking around uneasily at the places where children played games.

"What are you going to do?" Nick asked.

The bowed, bobbing head did not answer.

"Hey, jerk!" He leaned forward and gripped Tommy's shoulder and shook it insistently.

"Get away, get away," Tommy said.

"Come on, get up."

"Get away."

Nick shook him again and Tommy swung at Nick's hand and Nick pushed him back and for a moment Tommy lay flat out, his legs going up in the air and he cursed and then his face came up as he righted himself, sitting up.

Nick said, "Come on."

Tommy threw a punch, sloppily but not so feebly and it stung and Nick hit him back from an accumulation of petulance and Tommy was jolted back and down, his

arms flopping, and it was laughable the way he fell and seemed a joke, until there was the loud crack and then the sudden, frightening stillness.

Nick bent forward and peered timidly, reluctantly. Even in the dark he could see a slow, thick pool of blood gathering next to Tommy's head.

He stepped back, as if to gain a perspective, staring in disbelief at his friend, at the legs dangling and not quite lifelike anymore over the little rise of steps. A cold fear swept over him like a wind and his eyes rose from his friend up to the night with tragedy and supplication, and then his eyes came back to his inert friend, his own body tightening slowly in a constriction of dread as his head became hot and fogged with all the whiskey he himself had drunk.

He began to walk away, his eyes staring after with a kind of dazed hope. He stopped, taking a long look around, listening to the quiet. And then, with a prayer strange and forlorn in his heart, he went with the stillness and deference of a supplicant back to the thing on the steps and bent and peered at it, his teeth sinking into his underlip, his hand coming forward to touch but withdrawing instantly. And then he went away.

The wreath was gone from the door now, but the shades were still drawn, covering the grief, giving the house the bleak air of desertion. He went up the steps and rang the bell and waited, his head bent. The door opened and he looked up and stared at the woman's drawn, pale face, at her red, tear bruised eyes, at her severe black dress.

"Hello, Mary," he said.

"Hello, Nick," she said.

"I was passing."

"Come in."

He walked through the little foyer and into the dimness of the parlor where the air and the light seemed trapped and stale between the drawn shades. He did not want to but felt compelled to look at the picture on the table, the stiffly smiling face looking straight into him, it seemed. He sat down on a hard, straight chair.

"Do you remember when he went to have the picture taken?" she said.

"Yes," he said, compelled to look at it again, briefly.

"He said, 'What do you want a picture for when you've got me?'" She gazed at the picture, her eyes lost in it for a moment. Then she looked at him again. "Do you want a glass of anisette?"

"No."

"The police were here last night."

"They should leave you alone."

Her face was very sad. In her black, dress and stockings, she seemed somehow archaic, musty,

the soul of her pressed into dust.

"How are the kids?" he asked.

"They miss him. You sounded just like him," she said, her voice strangely remote for the moment. "The way you walked up and rang. Why did he go out and do those things, Nick?"

"I don't know," he said. He sat forward on his chair, uneasy.

"I wish you would have been with him that night. It wouldn't have happened then. When you were around he was all right. You always saw him home."

He looked up at her cold white face, his hands turning nervously in themselves. Abruptly he arose.

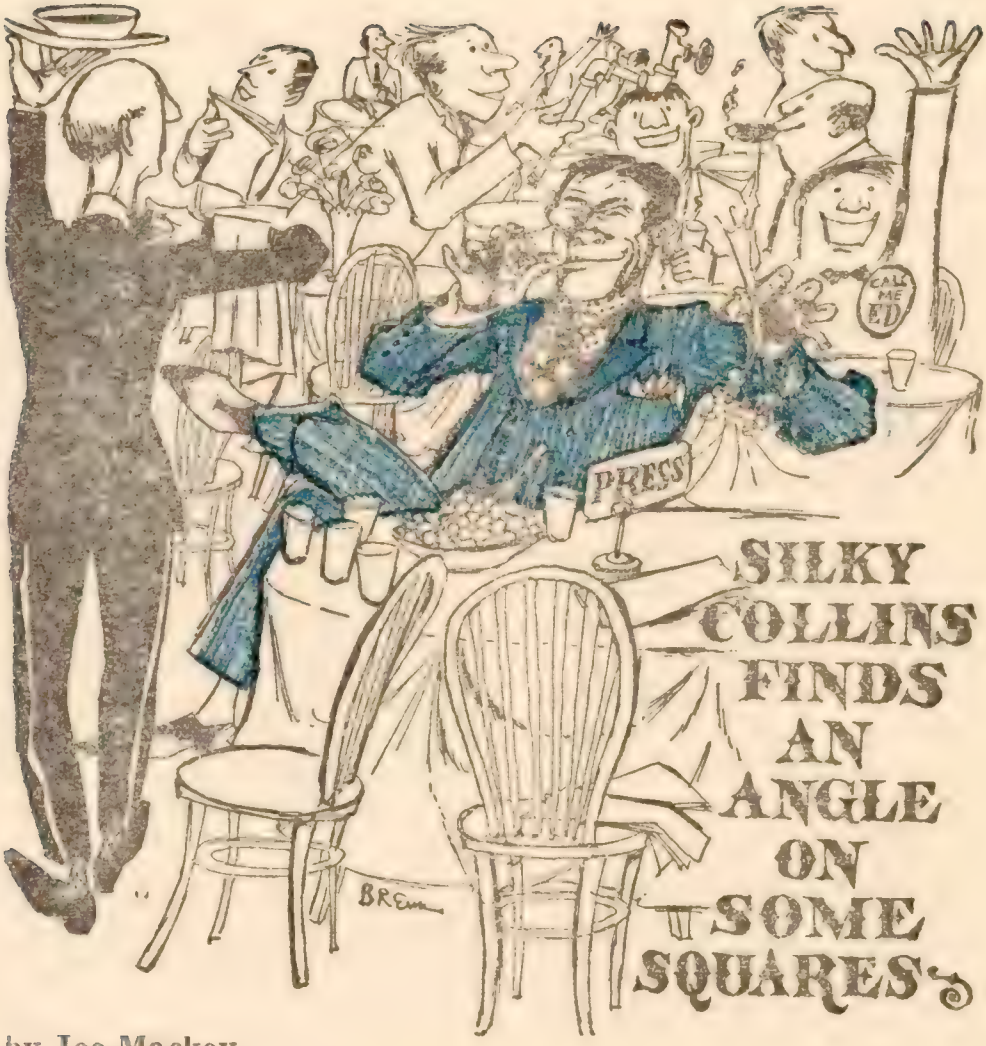
"I have to go, Mary," he said. He went by himself to the door and let himself out. He hurried away, conscious of her listening to him walking away.

He came back to the avenue, passing the people with lowered eyes, his hands stiffly in his pockets. Everything seemed to be flying past him, everything, as if in review, but he did not look. He went straight to his house, hurried up the stairs and went into his rooms, locking the door behind him. He took off his cap and his jacket and went to the closet and took out a quart of red wine. He seldom drank it. He did not like it. He only kept it because Tommy liked to drink it when he came over. He opened the bottle and sat down and began drinking.

My best friend, he thought. I killed my best friend. The police are still looking, still asking questions. I should have gone and told right away. But who tells when they have killed a man, whether by accident or not? But how will it be when they find out? They will not believe it was an accident. They will say why didn't you come right away and tell? They will say that Nick Aleno killed his best friend for some reason.

He drank again from the bottle, gulping the wine. It tasted hot, foul. He hated the taste.

Nick Aleno killed his best friend.

Two days later he was found. The quart bottle of red wine lay empty on the floor, just beneath where Nick had hung himself from the steampipe that wound around that part of the ceiling. In the neighborhood they said he had done it because Tommy DeAngelo had been his best friend and Tommy was dead.

SILKY COLLINS FINDS AN ANGLE ON SOME SQUARES

by Joe Mackey

Much of what I am today—which is a mute question in some quarters—I owe to the printed word. I do not mean just a word like "50" on the long green, but the riches in the world of books.

All my life I am seeking to better myself, to latch on to the sure-fire gimmick; and where do you think I finally find my gold-mine? —of all unlikely places, in the public library on Forty-Two Street.

On a day that is destined to give me a new leash on life, I am pouring through the card-index to look up S. Freud, the guy who knows what puts the bug in bughouse, when by a fortuitous break I come upon a card which says: "Frauds. See Also Impostors or Impostures,

Even crooks are drawn to the theatre by its magic; their particular purpose, naturally, is to filch some of its magic. Getting into the act, in short, is not enough for them; making off with it, shall we say, is closer to their heart.

Swindlers and Swindling." Agog, I thumb through the titles and find a veritable Pandora's box of wonders. I hurry to the book racks and grab four of the tomes listed. A fast gander shows me that here are related the exploits of the all-time aristocrats of the angle.

This, I ruminate, is almost as good as stealing a winning sweepstakes ticket. What better short-cut to success than to emulate the chiselings of the Old Masters? These capers—if artfully applied to our contemporary scene by a hip operator like one Silky Collins (me)—are enough to keep me in clover till the cows come home.

One thing I admire about trickery is that it is clean and smart and safe. To adopt the old shaving-cream jingle—no fuss, no bother, no rub-outs. The employment of violence is for people who do all their thinking outside their head. Oh, sometimes a spot of muscle is unavoidable, or even desirable, but as far as a way of life goes it can drop dead.

In con work, the risks are smaller and the rewards more commensurate. On some dumb heist, where a guy earns maybe one bill, they can throw away the key on him; whereas on a clever con job, you can net real loot and maybe pull only a term you can do on your thumb—or none at all.

Lest one get the wrong impression, I hasten to add that I am not always a devotee of literature. In childhood I have little time for bookworming, because I am busy conning the other kids out of their marbles and whatnot, rigging sand-lot baseball games, lifting wares from the local stores, and engaging in all the other pursuits dear to any red-blooded American boy.

I do not really dig the book routine till my mid-20's when I am doing a bit in durance vile—on a trumped-up charge, I may add. (His Honor at my trial is biased merely because my record shows a few innocent misdemeanors and one crummy felony of the kind anyone can get mixed up in without meaning any harm.)

What originally leads me into reading on a serious scale is the humdrum tedium of prison existence. For the benefit of those without any cell-block sojourns to their credit, I tell you without

hesitating that life in the clink can be very boring sometimes. The recreation facilities, even in the choicer cans, are—not to be ungracious—only fair to mediocre.

You get, for one thing, movies, visitors and baseball games. The movies are better than nothing, but not much, because they do not permit us to view any crime pictures where you can learn something, and they soft-petal the whistle-bait (not wishing to overstimulate the cons). Visitors take up just an iota of the time. As for baseball, my career on the diamond in the pen is very short-lived because I find many of the players, made moody by confinement, enjoy giving you the knee or the boot if you do not beat them to it. My career as an umpire is even more transient because in my maiden effort I try to throw the game to my pals in all fairness; but my decisions are greeted with such scurrilous imprecations that I am reduced to calling the plays on the up-and-up, which removes all my sporting instinct.

Other diversions in the clink are sparse. You can, for example, study the stars through the bars of your cell window—in fact, I become quite a savant on such heavenly bodies as the Big Dipper, Castor and Pollux and the Milky Way—but this is no all-day pastime. Finally, there is the gentle art of conversation. Talk in the can is about the same as anywhere—dames, horses, athletic events and capers. You keep your ears clean you can learn a lot, especially how *not* to pull jobs, although to hear some of the cons regale their exploits you get the impression they are Ponzi, or at least Public Enemies No 1, 2 and 3.

So I finally tumble to the prison library to pass the monotony. Up to this time, my reading is confined mainly to scratch sheets, funny papers, Want Ads (when I am temporarily bereft of loot) and a few serious books like "Louis Beretti" and "The Impatient Lady". But the prison library opens up a whole new world to me and I thus acquire much of the culture, wit and aplomb that today set me apart from most of my associates. It is not until later that I learn too much knowledge can be a two-headed sword.

Before my stretch is up I read maybe 40 books. You do something often enough, you establish a habit pattern, as natural as brushing one's teeth, wagering on the steeds, or dealing off the bottom; so when I am on the outside again, I continue my reading when there is time between other activities.

So it goes for the next 6, 7 years and I have amassed quite a package of lore, not only about such general topics as psychology, biography and good diction, but such specific and practical ones as locks, horse-breeding, fingerprints and card manipulation.

Then, on this red-letter day in the public library, I find these self-help and do-it-yourself books on frauds, etc., and I take out 4 of them in 1 fell swoop. I head straight for my pad, deigning such distractions as a floating crap game I know is on in a loft building on West Thirty-Nine and a gorgeous member of the distaff gender I know is yearning for me in a trap uptown.

As I peruse these tomes I see that here at my fingertips are gilt-edge examples of man's ingenuity at its finest. Some of the guys and gals who perpetrate these hoaxes, I find, do so for laughs, like Mexico's Concepcion Jurado, who poses as a mythical male millionaire and punctures stuff shirts and skirts all over the place. Now, I like to laugh as much as the next Joe, but I find I laugh more from the heart if $$ is involved, so I apply extra loving scrutiny to deals where the profit motif is paramount. My duty is as clear as the driven snow—to line up swindles that are suited to my purse and personality.

Schemes which require an outlay of capital are out, not because Silky is a slow one with the buck, but because—as of the nonce—capital is in absentia. Likewise, better I adopt a course which does not require confederates. If the need may be, I can call on many a trustworthy varlet of my acquaintance, but I do not like to ask friends to join an enterprise on mere speculation, and, what's more to the point, if I lone-wolf it there is only one payee—me—when the ship comes in. If success crowns my early efforts, I can always branch out and deal my pals in later, particularly guys like Gong-Gong Jones, Bad-Eye Moran, and No-Brain Balaban.

I clobber the old midnight oil, not even knocking off for a belt or a ham-on, and by the dawn's early light I am so full of angles that I feel like Ivar Kreuger out of Serge Rubenstein.

Trouble is, most of the frauds require both time and money. Time I have plenty of, but I am the impetuous type likes to make a fast killing. In the books I learn that the guy who fakes the famous "Cardiff Giant" spends more than a year planting his gypsum phony in the ground, a guy who "salts" a diamond mine spends even more time, and the character who forges documents to prove he owns half of Arizona and New Mexico makes a career out of the bit; but such slow motion buildups are not for Silky.

What finally gives me my big idea is the story about a teen-age kid named William Henry Ireland who in the late 1700s writes some plays he attributes to Shakespeare and they are hailed by the populace. Now, I know I cannot write any plays by Shakespeare—or even Minsky—but I can have tickets

printed *for* a play. This is my gimmick.

My first move is to pick a hit Broadway show, which shall be nameless, and buy an orchestra seat for a performance one month ahead. This, of course, requires a small cash investment, but you must spend money to make money.

Next, I take the ticket to a printer I happen to know has a few sub rosa black marks on his escutcheon—like he prints occasional bogus diplomas and such—because I figure it is child's play convincing him he should make duplicates of my ticket, if he wishes to remain on the outside.

"Why don't you guys get off my back?" he queries. "Two-three years now I am legit, still characters like you keep coming around implying I must do ignoble jobs for you or else."

"I am disconsolate, Inky-Dink," I tell him. "Had I anyone else to whom to go, I do not bother you. But my hands are tied."

"Awright. What you want?"

I tell him to match up the color, the stock and the type, making the tickets for the same date as the legit one, but putting different aisle and seat numbers on each one. I order only fifty tickets because I am not greedy. If this gimmick pays off, I figure I can eventually have tickets printed for the whole rostrum of hit B'way plays.

This shady Gutenberg has them for me in a few days.

"This, it may interest you to know," he greets me, "is my last job. I hand the business over to my brother-in-law."

"Oh? I thought you hate your brother-in-law."

"That is right," he says. "Didn't I tell you I'm giving him the business?"

"Well, be that as it may," I say, reaching for the tickets. I examine a couple of them and find they are as alike as peas in a pot. "You do a good job, Inky," I say, affixing the rubber band around the stack of tickets. "I give you a fin now and a bonus when I dispose of them."

"Skip it, Silky," he says. "Being as this is my swan song, it is on the house."

I thank the guy, bid him a cheery adieux and wend my way to the lobby of the theater, where I check the seating plan to see what kind of locations he gives me. I am highly satisfied; I have among the choicest seats in the house.

Meanwhile, I have been pondering how best to dispose of my phony Oakleys, and I call up the New York Convention & Visitors Bureau to find out what conventions are being held in town. I get a list of several at midtown hotels, don my best bib and tucket, and amble over to case the setup.

I figure a big convention is better for my purposes for several reasons. First, there are more people

and more pandemomium, and therefore less chance of me being seen and/or recognized by any house dicks because of past pecadilloes. Second, there will be more fish from out of town. And third, there is chance of press coverage.

This last is important because I decide I am going to pose as a reporter. A few times in the ago, I weary of hot dogs or famine and move in on an occasional convention luncheon by sitting at the press table.

Each time I get roast chicken, but this is like T-bone when you cannot afford hash. Also, I learn some valuable pointers—like they seldom ask you to flash your press card at these functions. Once in a while, at the entrance, they ask you to write down your name and the paper you represent. This is easy, and I always have enough savvy not to name a big N.Y. paper that is apt to have a McCoy reporter on the premises.

At the press table I always am polite but reserved and do not volunteer any dope about myself. The other reporters do not care who I am, and not much more who the speakers are. These luncheons are rarely considered journalistic plums. So I merely skin through the canned handouts and take some notes when the speakers are speaking. If a few reporters duck out to phone in time for their editions, I duck out too. And that is that. Only this time I do not duck out; after the luncheon, is when I really begin to operate.

I figure that establishing myself as a reporter is a novel and effective way of simplifying my unloading the fake tickets.

But first my problem is to grab the right convention. I head for a big hotel in the 30s, which we shall call the Rensselaer-Lucre, and am gandering the calendar of events in the lobby, when I spot an ironhat who once picks me up for some infraction like letting four friends have my room key. *This* hotel is off the agenda. Lest the sleuth see me, I am back out the revolving door almost before it stops revolving from my entrance.

My next stop is a few blocks north in a giant hostelry, where I have no trouble whatever since the time I acquire a bar bill without any moola with which to settle up; anyway, that is years ago, and the statue of limitations runs out. In this lobby there are no sherlocks, that I recognize, and I peruse the day's events and am favorably impressed by a national grocers' convention with a luncheon in the Grand Ballroom. However, it is only 11 in the A.M. and mess call is not till 1 so I decide to see what one more hotel offers.

It turns out I am glad I do, because the feature here is a luncheon—also in a Grand Ballroom—of wholesale plumbing supplies dealers, and ever since I have a

leaky faucet for three months one time in a one-room trap I am no friend of the plumbing industry. This is where I waltz today.

My next step is to determine what periodical I am going to represent, so I cut west to the public library and pour through a few reference books that list newspapers, magazines, etc.

I decide this is not the type clambake the daily press is liable to cover, so I hunt for trade journals in the plumbing industry. I do not want one published in N.Y. city because they probably will have a man at the convention. I finally find a suitable one—a weekly published in Newark, N.J.—and I appoint myself one of its star reporters.

At the portals to the Grand Ballroom, several square-looking dolls are sitting at tables and asking the identities of the entering delegates—some of whom are wearing "Call Me Ed" buttons, or ribbons saying something like "I Represent the Aristocrat Plumbing Supply Company of Zanesville." I favor one of the lassies with a smile and professionally tell her "Press" and she asks me to jot down my name and periodical. I write the name of the trade journal honestly enough but, of course, give a phony handle.

Inside the ballroom, the delegates—most of whom look prosperous and corn-fed and are wearing wide lapels—are milling around the tables, on which, I note alertly, are celery, olives and bottles of Scotch. Some of these jolly fellows are already seated and are sampling the viands and/or the booze. I head for the Press Table, which is still unoccupied, and treat myself to a small bite of celery and a large belt.

I am on my second stalk of celery and my third slug, when a few fellow journalists mosey up, nod to me, and sit down. They seem pleasant enough, but they do not identify themself so I am happy to remain anonymous. Just before the Tuxedo-garbed waiters clatter out with the soup, a guy bustles up to the Press Table, says he is the public relations director and passes out mimeographed programs and handouts of speeches.

I bestow a Winchellesque nod on this minor-domo and set about reading one of the releases. It turns out to be real gobbledygook to me, so I turn my full attention to the chow and the libations, meanwhile surveying the delegates at nearby tables and the speakers' table.

I notice that we are getting some looks from the other tables —the glamour of the press, you know—and I smile affably at a few of the oglers. I am unobtrusively Establishing My Presence.

After the strawberries-in-ice-cream, the windbags go to work at the speakers' table and we reporters follow their yakking via our prepared handouts. About 12 thou-

sand words later, the last speaker has finished and I hurry up to the dais—where I am in full view of the delegates—identify myself to one of the officials, ask him a few pertinent questions about his speech, and jot down his answers, which are Greek to me. I thank him and go down and mingle with the departing delegates.

I get next to one of the guys I see looking at me when I am at the Press Table, notice from his button that he is from Albany, and ask him if he would care to give me his views on the future of the plumbing industry for publication. He smiles about a mile wide and says he would be delighted and why don't we go to the bar and have a drink.

Goody, I think this is a live one. At the bar and the adjoining tables I spot other be-buttoned and be-ribboned delegates by the galore, and I realize this is a happy hunting ground indeed for a young man with a pocketful of phony theater tickets.

I dutifully write down the opinions of my man, whose name turns out to be Barney Kesten, and after we have had three drinks apiece and I have covered five sheets of paper, we are real buddy-buddy. He finally finishes his opinionating and asks me what issue the interview will appear in and I tell him next week. He wants to know how he can get copies and I tell him I will send him six free ones, which further cements our growing friendship.

With business out of the way, we begin talking socially and he shows me pictures of his wife and kids and his Cadillac; so I am not conscience-stricken about taking him. I manufacture a wholesome biographical background about myself and I see he is favorably impressed.

Then I casually steer the conversation into more productive channels. I ask him what he has been doing in town and he tells me he goes to the fights at the Garden one night and to a night club.

"Do you get to see any good shows?" I ask.

"One," he says, "but it is hard to get tickets to the ones I want to see."

"I suppose so," I say.

"You suppose! I'll say. But, oh, I guess in your profession you do not have much trouble."

Brother! I think. If I am out fishing and this guy is a mackerel, he swallows not only the worm and the hook but the line.

"No, as a matter of fact," I admit, "being a reporter definitely has its advantages."

"Do you get a discount?"

"I am always sent house seats for my wife and myself from the press agent," I say in a sentence which is distinctive for containing not one but two lies—inasmuch as I do not get house seats and I do

not have a wife, at least not my own.

"That is wonderful," he says, looking at me like I am Golden Boy.

"I can occasionally get passes for friends," I say, "but usually the best I can do is to get tickets at box-office prices when they are unavailable at the box office."

"I wish I knew you before I came to the city," he says. "I go home tomorrow."

"I doubt if I could have helped you on short notice. These things take time. Matter of fact, by sheer coincidence I happen to have a batch of tickets in my pocket right now. But they are for a performance about a month from now."

"Yeah?" he says. What show?"

I tell him and his yap drops open.

"Gee! I want to see that but tickets cost a fortune through the agencies. How do you come by yours?"

"A bunch of us reporters are having a get-together and I am put in charge of getting enough tickets because I have some pretty good connections along the Gay White Way."

"I do not suppose you can spare a couple," he says.

I can feel the moola warming my pocket already. I look dubious and wrinkle my brow. "We-el, I order a few more than we actually need, but I don't know—"

"What are they priced at?"

"Eight-o-five. Very choice-type seats."

"I give you ten dollars apiece."

"I am not a speculator," I tell him with a somewhat injured air. "If I let you have a couple, I am not interested in making a profit."

"I do not mean to offend you, Leslie," he says (inasmuch as I tell him my name is Leslie).

"No offense. I just do not operate that way. Do you wish two?"

"I do not mean to impose, but could you possibly make it four? There is another couple I like to bring down."

"It is lucky you meet me today," I say. "I am going to return the extras this afternoon."

"Boy, I'll say I'm lucky," he says, pulling out his wallet. He gives me an extra five note. "Please, Leslie. Please accept at least *that* much profit. And I am going to send you a bottle of Scotch."

"Oh, very well, Barney," I yield gracefully. "But forget the Scotch. I enjoy doing things for people. If you cannot spread a little happiness, what is the use?"

And, you know, I *am* spreading a little happiness. They say anticipation is greater than realization, right? Well, look at all the fun Barney and his feathered friends are going to have looking forward to the play. The fact that they are not going to see it—at least not with these tickets—is only an anticlimax.

"You are right, Leslie," he says

seriously. "We should be more considerate of others." He laughs, a little embarrassed. "I am going to be more like you in the future."

Already, I reflect, I help human progress; because, of course, he is not going to be like the real me.

"You have been so regular, Leslie," he says, "that I do not wish to push my luck, but would you mind telling me how many extras you now have left?"

"About half a dozen. Why?"

He sinks his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. "Well, I have a few friends here who could do me some good in a business way if I could do them a favor."

"What kind of a favor?" I boob it.

"Like getting them tickets to a Broadway play," he says, smiling archly.

"Gee, I do not know, Barney—"

"You say you are going to return the extras anyway."

"Ye-es, but I buy them in the first place with the understanding that I return those us reporters do not need."

"So who has to know you do not need them all?" He winks.

I am happy to see that my fish is a chiseler in his heart. This makes it pleasanter to take him.

Well, the upshoot is that in the next hour I discreetly dispose of eight more tickets to three of good old Barney's good old friends, bringing my grand total for the day's pleasurable work to a considerable digit and reaffirming anew my belief that people believe what they *want* to believe.

By this time, Barney, in the flush of his good fortune in meeting me, has consumed about shirteen Schotches onna rocksh and is temporarily disconnected both mentally and financially, so I give him the subtle brush. He and his friends lurch out, vowing eternal friendship for me and promising to look me up when they get back to town.

I mosey down to the far end of the bar and am binding my time over a drink or two until I should see another likely looking fish. Soon I pull the interview bit on another big plumbing type and permit him to talk me out of two tickets. When I admit that I have a few more left, he begs me not to dispose of them here but to accompany him for dinner to his country club in Something-or-other, New Jersey, which he says is only about 20 minutes across the G. Washington Bridge.

He, too, has a Caddy, so I decide to give this country club of his a whirl, figuring I will not only unload more tickets, but I may get next to some debutante or golf widow and thus combine the pleasure of making dough with that of making time.

Stuart (that is his name) burns up the road and in what seems like a trice we are in Something-or-other, New Jersey, and heading

up a country lane for the club. It turns out to be a Colonial-type bldg., gay with lights and sounds of laughter and tinkling glasses.

"Great bunch of fellas," Stuart briefs me. "You will like them."

I will like their moola, I think.

We go into the bar and Stuart tips me not to flash any tickets until he gets me next to the favored few he wishes to partake of the bounty. I make a fast case and see there are no broads present except a couple of wife types, so I decide to stick to business and quaffing.

Within the half hr., I have drained four Scotches and dumped six more tickets on three of Stuart's pals. Then he introduces me to a Mr. Waterman, who buys two tickets. I am temporarily distracted from Mr. Waterman; then I feel a tap on my shoulder and he is asking me will I stick around till he phones his spouse and asks her if she wants her sister to come to the play, too.

I assure him I will be on tap and I am working on my next belt when I see him come in with a guy who is wearing a uniform, and not that of a fireman. There is only one door and I am not near it, so I take a fast gander out the window and see that we are a good 20 feet from mother earth, which is covered with gravel. Before I can jump or fall, as the newspapers say, Mr. Waterman—whom I am already thinking of as Mr. Waterloo—and the Law are standing right in front of me.

"This is the gentleman, officer," Waterman says, pointing at me.

"I think we had better take a walk," the cop tells me.

"What is the meaning of this?" I demand, talking ten feet tall but feeling about half that height.

"Let us talk it over at the station," he says.

"What is this?" old loyal Stuart cries. "What does he do?"

"He takes you for a sleigh-ride, Stu. He is a fake."

"Now, wait a minute," Stuart objects.

I see some darkening faces in the crowd, however, and I think maybe I am safer at the police station.

"Okay, officer," I say. But first I have to find out something. I turn to Waterloo. "On what do you base your accusations?"

"On facts. I call up the trade journal you claim to represent and they say they never hear of you."

"Why do you take this sneaky step?" I ask. "Do you have a naturally suspicious nature?"

"No," he says, "the tickets give you away." Out of his wallet he pulls the tickets I sell him and tells me to examine them.

I do, and see that both are fine examples of the counterfeiter's art. Then I turn them over and am dumb foundered. Neatly printed on the back of one of them is the following: "This ticket is a phony and so is the seller. He is Silky

Collins." Then it gives my three last addresses and continues to say, "If he is not at any of these places, look in the Hot Times Square Bar, where he will be if he is broke."

The vengeful and treacherous hand of Inky-Dink, the reluctant printer, I realize.

The unforeseen. The unexpected has loused up more fine men and grand schemes. My whole caper is a great one, but it collapses because of the fickle finger of fate and the perfidy of one man.

Stuart is yelling imprecations at me and demanding his money back, and so are the others, so I decide it is high time we make tracks. The cop tells the maddening throng everything will be straightened out at the police station and for everyone involved to get in their cars.

He walks me toward a patrol car and rubs it in. "A real wise guy, hey?" he sneers.

A host of sallies spring to mind and I am on the point of telling him that I am such a big-time operator they call me the Dr. Kildare of the rackets, or I can open any joint in his whistle-stop with a bent piece of gum, but I observe he is a big, strappy guy with fists like a Virginia ham. Not to mention a large chunk of artillery. As I suspect he has gray matter in inverse proportion, I content myself with an enigmatic smile.

This is a real creep ending to a glorious gimmick. But even in this extremity, I do not lose my sense of humor. I almost chortle aloud at the mental picture of the pandemonium that is going to take place at the legitimate theatre when good old Barney and his friends and their wives show up with their phony tickets.

More than this, what keeps me from despairing is the realization that during the solely-indoors vacation I am undoubtedly going to take, I have plenty of time to mull over swindles that are foolproof, even against mean ones like Mr. Waterloo and black guards like Inky-Dink. And I have time also to devise a revenge that will eight-ball Inky for a long, long time after I get out.

Which One's The GUILTY One?

by Edward Wellen

Waiting for the door to open, Mort Seymour sat slumped as if he felt the weight of all his years. At times he closed his eyes for an instant against a flash of pain, but always opened them quickly and fixed them on the door. He heard footsteps and tried to remember the police sergeant's name. He felt a minor panic as he tried to recall it before the sergeant entered.

He fell back in his chair in relief; he paid with one more flash of pain—for relaxing too suddenly—but that was all right, for he'd remembered that the sergeant's name was Young. Mort Seymour made it a point to learn and use the name of everyone he met, not merely because he knew it flattered a customer or prospective customer, but because he knew everyone had an identity and wanted others to be aware of that identity, that unique identity, in a world that more and more swallowed it up, reduced it to slots in a business machine card.

The door opened and Mort Seymour heard the blunt instruments of thick fingers pecking away at a typewriter, heard the rasp of a voice grating away at a telephone, and Sgt. Young entered. Sgt. Young had been youthful once; now he was as gray as Mort Seymour. In spite of all their differences, all their spites, that was one thing all men had in common, they shared the passing of time.

Mort Seymour started to his feet, but Sgt. Young waved him down.

"Take it easy," the sergeant said.

"Thank you, Sgt. Young," Mort Seymour said. He was glad to sink back; he hadn't thought his legs would be so shaky.

Sgt. Young lifted the desk lamp to the top of the filing cabinet and aimed the shine at the blank wall as though lighting a stage setting. Then he leaned out into the corridor and beckoned and six men filed in and lined up against the blank wall. Sgt. Young eyed Mort Seymour and stretched out his right hand toward the men, palm up, as if serving them to him on a platter.

Mort Seymour screwed up his eyes and scrutinized the six men. They were all the same general size, but there were differences; it

was by the differences that he would know the man for whom he was looking. The first was too sandy; the second was too fleshy; the third was too dark; the fourth—

Mort Seymour pushed himself to his feet. He stood there unsteadily, but he stood there. He stared into the eyes of the fourth man. The man stared back boredly. Mort Seymour glanced at the fifth and sixth man, but his gaze came back to the fourth. Mort Seymour moved nearer to the light. On the unillumined side of his head, a patch of gauze and tape gave back pale light coming off the wall behind him; on the inside of his head there was something of the fear that lingered from the time men lived in caves and fell back in terror from a flash of lightning. Mort Seymour disregarded the pain and pointed.

"That's the man." He tried to hold his finger steady.

"Which one?" Sgt. Young sounded hopeful.

"That one. Fourth from the end."

Sgt. Young sighed. Mort Seymour turned to see the sergeant grimace and shake his head sadly.

"I was afraid of this," the sergeant said. "Sorry, Mr. Seymour, you're still too shook up to give us a good make. Maybe later." But his voice said he doubted it.

Mort Seymour knew he was gaping, but he could not help it. He swallowed hard and said, "What do you mean? I tell you that's the man."

Sgt. Young canted his head and the six men started to file out. The sergeant said, "Muller, you stay."

The fourth man stepped aside and waited. Mort Seymour eyed him thinking, *That's the man. That's the man. I know that's the man. What's wrong with Sgt. Young?*

Sgt. Young had been on his feet all day. He sighed profoundly. "I was hoping you meant the third man. He was our hottest suspect."

Mort Seymour pointed again to the fourth man, almost touching him. "This is the man who came into my store and hit me on the head and robbed me."

Sgt. Young looked as if he wanted to make a face, but he said patiently, "Mr. Seymour, this man

Robbery is not too highly thought of in the best circles. For one thing, it lacks the drama of those felonies whose ancestry can be traced quite far back. And so there are criminals of breeding today who would not be seen with a common robber.

is Officer Muller. He's a plainclothesman. When we put up a suspect for a witness to identify, we make it a practice to put him up alongside plainclothesmen who come near fitting the same description. That way the suspect gets a fair shake and can't go crying in court that we practically told the witness it was him."

Mort Seymour stared at Officer Muller, who stared back boredly. He shook his head stubbornly, disregarding flashes of pain. When, in half the world, crime not only put on the mask of innocence but threw about itself the robe of the law and forced the victim to stand before the bar, why was it so strange to uncover a policeman-bandit? He was about to say something of the sort, but Sgt. Young was speaking.

Sgt. Young seemed to be trying to be gentle, but sounded as if there was something he was angry about. "Look, Mr. Seymour, we all get old. None of us can sidestep it. The legs get weary; the hands get shaky; the eyes get blurry. Nothing to make you feel ashamed; we all get old. Muller, take Mr. Seymour home."

Mort Seymour wanted to cry out, make loud protest; the sergeant didn't know what he was doing, sending him off alone with the man Mort Seymour knew had come into his store and hit him on the head and robbed him. But pain blinded him; by the time he could see and speak again, he saw that Sgt. Young had left him alone with Officer Muller.

Officer Muller, still seeming bored, slowly took the lamp down off the filing cabinet and put it back on the desk, the shadows changing on his face, forming menacing wedges. Mort Seymour read into the cuneiforms a warning to leave. So while Officer Muller was adjusting the shade, he edged toward the doorway, meaning to make off before Officer Muller could follow him.

Mort Seymour, hearing no footsteps behind him, felt he was making it and quickened his step. But Officer Muller caught up with him. He said nothing as they walked together through the detective squad room. The man typing and the man phoning did not glance up as they passed.

At the parking spaces adjoining the station house, Officer Muller stopped and pointed to a long black sedan.

Mort Seymour shook his head, saying, "That's all right, I'll take a taxi."

Officer Muller said, "I'll take you." His voice was quiet but firm.

Mort Seymour said, "I don't want to put you to any trouble."

Officer Muller said, "The Sergeant told me to take you."

"Can't you tell him you took me?"

For the first time, Officer Muller lost his bored look. He said with

a half smile, "Still think I'm the man?"

Mort Seymour eyed Officer Muller. If only he had heard the bandit speak. But beyond a grunt of surprise, he was pretty sure the bandit had made no sound. If he had said anything—say a muttered comment on the amount of the loot—in Mort Seymour's unconscious hearing it struck no note now when Officer Muller spoke. Officer Muller's smile grew and Mort Seymour suddenly felt like an old man.

Officer Muller offered a hand, but Mort Seymour forced himself to straighten. He said, "I'll make out all right." He smiled sheepishly. "About that identification, a man—you know—hates to admit he's growing old and can't see good anymore."

Officer Muller nodded. He steered Mort Seymour to the long black sedan and they got in. "Where do you live?"

Mort Seymour said tiredly, "I'm not going home. I'm going to open the store."

Officer Muller gazed at the bandage and at Mort Seymour's pale face and shrugged. "Okay."

He shot the car out onto the street and turned left.

Mort Seymour's heart began to make a hollow thumping sound he feared Officer Muller would hear. If Officer Muller was innocent, he wouldn't know where the store was. Why then had he turned left? Mort Seymour's heart quieted. It was a one-way street; Officer Muller had to turn left. Now Mort Seymour remained silent and waited.

Before they reached the corner, Officer Muller said, "Where's the store?"

"Keep heading this way," Mort Seymour said, "till you reach Eccles, then turn right. It's near the end. Twelve, number twelve."

Officer Muller nodded. It had grown suddenly dark and he switched on the headlights. It was strange and terrifying, Mort Seymour thought, to be riding in this long black car through this sudden darkness, that made familiar streets flashing by unfamiliar. He had an urge to make light of it with small talk, but instead kept eyeing Officer Muller's flickering face.

All at once Officer Muller clapped his massive hands on the black wheel and laughed thunderously; the noise sent a bolt of pain through Mort Seymour's skull.

Officer Muller glanced sidewise at the man beside him and said, "Be funny if it was me, wouldn't it now?"

Mort Seymour smiled feebly.

"You're lucky it ain't me," Officer Muller said with another sidewise glance. "Know why? If it was me, and I thought you really believed it was me and was gonna do something about it, I'd make short work of you. Know how?

Another blow on the same spot. They'd just think it was delayed shock from the first blow killed you."

Mort Seymour smiled even more feebly. He stared at the flickering face. Was Officer Muller really the man, and therefore threatening him obliquely? Or was he merely having fun getting back at Mort Seymour for having wrongly identified him?

Officer Muller laughed again. "That would be funny."

Mort Seymour made an effort to seem amused. "Yes, it would."

Whatever the truth might be, he did not want to think about the whole thing. He was almost glad for the times the pain would not let him think. But he made himself think. Fingering the bandage on his head, he lived again the moment that led up to the assault. Probably suspecting a gun under the counter, the bandit had timed it so Mort Seymour was away from the counter, his back to the open door, reaching up to arrange the bottles on the shelves. Mort Seymour wouldn't even have heard the soft swift approach, if the man's toe had not stubbed on the warped plank the landlord was always fixing to fix, but never got around to fixing. Mort Seymour whirled, but had had time for only a fleeting look at the man before the blow landed.

A flash of pain reminded him of Sgt. Young's painful words; especially painful because they were true. The years had crept up on him. The legs were weary; the hands were shaky; the eyes were blurry.

He had to come to terms with life. He sighed. And he smiled, when Officer Muller glanced at him. It was not Officer Muller's fault that he looked—to the old eyes of Mort Seymour—so like the bandit. Mort Seymour felt a deep gratefulness that it had not been some other innocent man he had pointed out, someone without Officer Muller's official standing, someone without an alibi. He shivered; he, Mort Seymour, might have borne false witness.

Officer Muller was swinging the long black sedan to the curb. "This it?"

Mort Seymour looked around with a start; there was the sign, Seymour Wines & Spirits. He nodded. It was an embarrassing moment for him. He didn't quite know how to apologize and thank and bid good-bye all at the same time. He eyed Officer Muller; it was hard to tell if he had hurt the man's feelings so deeply, that trying to make up for it by offering him something would in itself add to the hurt feelings.

He found his voice. "Yes, this is it."

Officer Muller appeared impressed by the window display. "Nice place you got here."

"Thanks," Mort Seymour said.

"Small, but it's a good neighborhood for a package store. I make a living." He thought he would crack a joke. "But it's too small for both me and the bandits to make a living out of."

Officer Muller said, "Yeah," indifferently.

The mistaken identification was between them again. Mort Seymour was more than ever anxious to make amends. "Let me at least offer you a bottle of something," he said. "Whatever you like."

This did not seem to hurt Officer Muller's feelings; he seemed pleased, in fact. They got out of the car. Mort Seymour drew out his keys and opened the door of the store and flicked on the lights and the rows of bottles shone. He went behind the counter to be ready with the wrapping paper and string. Officer Muller stood in the doorway staring around at the bottles.

Mort Seymour waved a hand. "Whatever you like."

Officer Muller, his eyes fixed on a bottle, started forward for it. Unthinkingly, automatically, he sidestepped the warped board, and stopped.

Mort Seymour eyed Officer Muller and thought, *He's the man.* Officer Muller eyed him and knew that he knew. They faced one another, for a frozen instant. Then Officer Muller made a move toward the blackjack at his hip.

But Mort Seymour's hands reached swiftly and surely under the counter and gripped his gun firmly and swung it up and pointed it at Officer Muller. Mort Seymour's feet were planted and his hand was steady and his eyes were bright.

He said, "If you don't want to get older, make another move."

He stood straight; he had his man. But had he? A flicker of panic unsteadied him. Sidestepping the board had shown that Muller was guilty, but you needed more than that, and a flash of guilt in a man's eyes, for conviction. You needed solid evidence.

His hand wavered. But then, in the very next instant, his hand was steady again. There might be a trace of Mort Seymour's flesh or blood or hair on the blackjack; there might be a sliver of wood, from the warped plank, deep-driven into the toe of one of Muller's shoes; there might be traces of dust from Mort Seymour's cash drawer, dust peculiar to a liquor shop, clinging to bills in Muller's wallet. But this was a job for Sgt. Young to do, and there was no doubt about it now that he would do it.

Wonderful, WONDERFUL VIOLENCE

by Donald Honig

WHAT made it all so ludicrous was the fact that Angus Monroe was the most unlikely person in the bank to be caught up in so harrowing and dramatic a situation. He was the most ordinary and inconspicuous sort of person imaginable—just above fifty, short, portly, gray, immaculate, wordless. He was a shy bachelor, without friends, who lived in two rooms on the other side of town.

But beneath that veneer of reticence and anonymity there beat a sullen and resentful heart. Angus had the feeling that the world had cruelly passed him by, that he had never participated. There were, as a consequence, no grand and gaudy memories to sustain his loneliness.

He appeared at the bank's front door with predictable punctilio at five to nine every morning, materializing there like a ghost, neat, indisputable, inevitable, his hat balanced on his small head, his small eyes staring blinkless and persistent behind their silver-rimmed lenses. The assistant manager opened the door and greeted him with a curt nod to which Angus responded with just as curt a nod and a brisk "Good morn-

Just because banks have a money-all-around decor, does not mean that working in a bank is pure delight. After all, the take-home pay is normally limited—by guards most strategically placed. Aware of all these shortcomings, our portly hero —and I have understandable empathy for the portly—did something, of which those of you who are bankers may not wholeheartedly approve.

ing," and in his heart chanting with bitterness the same refrain, *You pompous owl.* He marched with short steps past the other employees, each of whom rendered him an assembly-line nod of greeting, to the employees' room where he hung away his hat and coat and poked his arms into his tan-colored working jacket, buttoned it primly and went out and took his place as teller behind the third window just as the nine o'clock bell rang and with great pomp and dignity the assistant manager swept the doors back with a grand and benign baring of white teeth whether customers were there or not. *You'd think the King of England himself was coming through,* Angus thought darkly to himself.

The routine never varied. At the next window stood Mr. Carlisle, tall, good-looking, unctuous, with a smooth and clever word for every attractive feminine patron. All of that grated intolerably on Angus' nerves, as he stood and listened to Carlisle say all the things he himself would like to say. It all made him clench his thin lips until they turned white.

And then one morning, a little

before ten o'clock, the routine varied, violently. Angus had just left the cage to get a cup of water and was walking across the floor when two men moved through the door, letting the doors swing back behind them. They strode imperiously, their faces set, their long, taut-belted trench-coats flapping tersely with each step. Angus stared at them curiously, feeling an odd intuitive snap inside of himself, finding himself wishing that these men really were what he felt them to be. Their mere entrance seemed to generate something in the staid and placid air, a stirring, an uneasiness. They would do something, Angus hoped. They would hold up the tellers, throw bombs, fire bullets through the nerveless infuriating clock; they would do something.

And they did.

One of the men, the taller, slid his hand into his coat and snapped out a gun. There was instant pandemonium, even before he uttered a word. A woman teller screamed. The assistant manager sprung up at his desk—and in the face of a mighty .45 automatic, sat right down. The tall man was snapping orders, moving along the windows, his gun prominently in the faces of everyone. The smaller man was taking charge of the several patrons, herding them together against a wall which was obscured from outside eyes. The tall man, his fedora pulled forward almost covering his eyes, was collecting money in a large canvas bag. It was all happening swiftly, uncannily, almost dreamlike, the excitement poised and bristling in the startled air.

"You too!" Suddenly Angus heard the words directed at him, realized that this was the second time the small man had spoken to him. The portly teller was standing alone in the middle of the floor watching everything like a spectator, reserving all judgment. He realized that everyone was looking at him, as if expecting him to take some action.

The small man came menacingly toward him, holding his .45 automatic low, the black barrel glaring up at Angus.

"Get over there!" the small man hissed.

"I—heard you," Angus said, but still unable to move, rooted to the spot, not afraid but fascinated, almost like a child, watching it all with that blank speechless fascination of the child.

"Come on!" the tall man called. He was moving away from the tellers' cages, holding the large canvas bag the top of which slacked over but which still showed considerable content. "Take him," the tall man said.

The small man shot a quizzical glance over his shoulder, then, turning back to Angus, drove the .45 up into his soft yielding stomach, making Angus gasp.

"Move out, Maxie," the small man said to Angus. "Slow and careful." He moved around behind Angus.

The tall man was at the door, addressing the line of frozen-faced people.

"Anybody says anything before fifteen minutes," and he indicated the approaching Angus, "and he gets flowers and regrets." Then with a bold and confident gesture, he swung open the doors and went out, followed by a hesitant, doubtful Angus and the small man whose eyes, as cold and as rigid as steel, swept meaningfully over the people.

There was a car parked up the block. As they approached it Angus could hear the motor trembling under the hood.

The tall man appeared casual, but his words and his gestures were brisk, cold, calculated.

"Shove the guy in front with us," he said, talking, moving, all in one smooth practiced breath, opening the door, the canvas bag disappearing into the back.

"All right, Maxie," the small man said, pushing Angus with his body. Angus slid across the front seat's cold smooth plastic seat-cover. In a moment the two men were around him and the car had started.

Angus, still not fully emerged from his dream, from the shock of imagination ceasing and reality beginning, stared straight ahead through the wide curve of windshield, feeling an importance, a significance that he had never known before, a tingling of great excitement. Suddenly before his inward eye flashed the scene that must be occurring back at the bank. He saw them all darting around like people hurled and juggled, babbling and exclaiming and telling each other what had happened and what they thought and how awful it had been. And preeminent above it all would be his name, their concern for him, Angus Monroe, who had been abducted by thieves, thrust into the hands of potential killers, whose life was suddenly a heroic and dreadful thing. If only they could see how calm and composed he was, how easily he was facing it.

He began to sidle glances at the men. The tall man, guiding the wheel, sat aloof, his profile slightly raised, watching the road with a disinterest and impatience as though he had covered it a thousand uneventful times in his life and would a thousand times more. The other sat in a slouch, his arms crossed, a wryly pleased expression on his face. Angus could fairly feel him whirling the money about in his warped and corrupted brain.

But soon the captive began to feel a slight trickling of fear and apprehension. He felt it quavering in his knees, wallowing in his stomach. The excitement had worn away, the glory beginning to

become dubious. But he endeavored to suppress the fear, to resist it, master it. He cleared his throat. This seemed to arouse the small man.

"Y'know, Maxie's all right," the small man said, shifting about in his seat.

The tall man said nothing.

"No fuss, no yelling," the small man said.

"Nobody argues with a revolver," Angus said dryly, and was immediately pleased with himself. He thought it a singularly apt and clever statement. (Certainly, the obnoxious Carlisle would never have had the composure and alertness of mind in this situation to say such a thing.)

"Maxie," the small man said genially, grinning with small, rotted teeth that only half showed, "you're acquainted with a basic law of survival."

"My name is not Maxie," Angus said, still in that dry, almost bored tone. "My name is—" and he could not say Angus. That was suddenly a most ridiculous and unfortunate and unmanly name, hardly a name to invoke respect. "—Floyd," he said, making a spontaneous choice, pleased with it.

"Maxie," the small man retorted promptly. "Your name is Maxie. Isn't that right, Champ?" he asked the tall man.

"His name is Blank for all I care," Champ said.

"His name will be Blank if he doesn't behave himself," the small man said.

"I know which side my bread is buttered on," Angus said, tossing it off with a casualness which astonished him.

"He'll behave," Champ said.

"You know why we call him Champ?" the small man asked. "That's because that's what he is. He's the champ of them all. Right, Champ?"

The tall man grinned tersely, his eyes still watching the road as if he expected it to break into pieces. "You could say that," he said.

They were outside of the town now, speeding past neat little cottages, past great fields of barley, past the high school, heading out toward the country. The grass was very green, the trees rich in leaves and scent. The small man rolled down the window and the warm breeze poured into the car.

Angus was desperately anxious to ask where they were going, but he knew such a question would be curtly repulsed. He was grimly determined not to behave like a 'victim'; so he sat as stolid and as noncommittal as if he were a legitimate part of the whole thing.

"You got a family, Maxie?" the small man asked, apropos of nothing.

"No," Angus said.

"That's good," the small man said.

It made the fear begin to tremble again. It sped the realities skidding into Angus' mind. He was utterly helpless here between these two men. He knew their faces now, even the name of one of them. He knew their car, the direction they had taken. They were being too casual with him, as if they could trust him never to speak of what had happened. It made him wish he had never come to work that morning, or that he had not stopped and stood so fearless and prominent in the middle of the floor for them to take him out. What was he going to gain from being a hero?

"I'm a man with a weak heart," he suddenly said, improvising.

"Hear that, Champ?" the small man said, leaning over to talk to the tall man. "Maxie's got a bad clock. Don't scare him."

"Wouldn't think of it," Champ said.

Soon they were deep in the country. They drove for miles without passing a house or a person or even another car. The tar road was dark with languorous shadows that kept clipping and bounding over the hood and fleeing up the windshield.

If Angus had been hoping for them to be stopped by state troopers or to encounter a road block somewhere, that hope was soon dissipated. They turned off the main road into a narrow dirt road, the car grinding over the rocks and ruts, a vague cloud of dust lifting around it, floating behind in the windless air. They slashed through some brush and then came to a halt before a small, lifeless cabin. The halt, the sudden silence, was a relief.

The two men slid out of the car. The small man waited for Angus. The gun had reappeared, steady and menacing below the tight-smiling face. The tall man had reached in and hauled out the bag of money. They followed him into the cabin.

There was nothing inside except a table and several chairs. A small, low cot stood against a wall. There was one window, the shade pulled down before it, muffling the sunlight that fell dimly to the floor. Their feet clumped on the pineboard floor.

Champ swung the bag onto the table.

"Get the rope," he said, his voice quiet, sharp, as if talking to no one in particular, but knowing that someone would be there to hear, and obey.

They're going to hang me, Angus thought feverishly. Wild schemes filled him with furious desperation. His eyes glared.

The small man went out and in a moment returned with a length of rope. He was whistling.

"Tie him up," Champ said, his voice still sharp and confident, his eyes hard upon the bag of money.

With relief, Angus gave him-

self to be bound. The small man sat him down in one of the chairs and with maddening efficiency tied him to it, binding his hands behind with the heavy scratchy rope. Angus sat there, as helpless and forlorn as a child. He watched the two men hold the bag upside down, and the money empty onto the table. Champ was looking at him, smiling across the table at him.

"How much do you reckon it is?" Champ asked.

With his practiced eye, Angus regarded the money, his underlip pushing out.

"Ten thousand," he said after a moment.

"Maxie should know," the small man said.

"We'll see," Champ said. Slowly, tediously, he began to count the money, thumbing the edges of the packets, sliding the loose bills from hand to hand.

"Eleven thousand five," he said, finally.

There was a moment of reverence.

"Maxie was close," the small man said.

"What are you going to do to me?" Angus, unable to hold back any longer, blurted out

"Let it be a surprise," Champ said.

"Yeah," the small man said. "Do you like surprises, Maxie?"

"Only pleasant ones," Angus said dimly.

His captors sat down then and lit cigarettes. They smoked quietly, placidly. For awhile they seemed oblivious of Angus' presence. They seemed to be inhaling their wealth, accustoming themselves to it. They were quite at their ease.

Angus began to feel the indignity of himself sitting there bound and helpless, as miserable as a creature in a cage. He stared at them, his mounting indignation—as well as their oblivious serenity—making him want to shout at them. And then his thoughts began to drift back to the bank again, to all the furor and excitement which must have occurred there, most of which would have subsided by now. Everyone would be expressing concern for Mr. Monroe. He imagined them envisioning his plight, shaking their heads, talking about what a fine old person he was. He wanted to snarl at them. He thought then, inexplicably, of the application form he had filled out twenty years ago when he had first applied for a job at the bank, of the line which read, 'In case of emergency notify' and of the blank space he had left below it. Poor Mr. Monroe. That would go around the bank too. He would be a lonely heroic figure. Life would be changed for awhile when he got back, when he took his place behind the teller's window again. He would be a more formidable person then, but only

for a little while, gradually fading back into obscurity—if he got back.

They stuffed the money into the bag and took it out with them. He heard them putting it in the car. Then Champ came back and lay down on the cot that was behind Angus. Soon he was sleeping. The small man lounged in the doorway. He had shed his trench coat. His .45 bulged in his belt.

"What are you going to do?" Angus asked quietly.

"Nothing much, Maxie," the small man said. He was smoking, staring into the forest, the smoke weaving lazily on the dry windless air, rolling off into the forest.

"Are you going to leave me here?"

"Maybe. When it gets dark we're taking off."

"They'll be looking for your car."

"But not around here. They'll have us pegged as being a long way out by tonight."

"Clever," Angus said.

"We sure do hope so, Maxie," the small man said, flicking his cigarette into the air, expelling a final stream of smoke into the sunlight, sighing.

It was beginning to grow dark. The two holdup men were sitting outside in the car. Angus could hear the murmur of their voices. They had been sitting out there for almost two hours, ever since Champ had risen from his sleep. And all that while Angus had been wriggling and straining his hands, gradually loosening his bonds. It excited him greatly when he realized that his hands were almost free, that with a few more jerks and twists they would be free. What would happen then he did not know. He gazed hopefully at the window, but it was right next to the car; it would hardly be the place from which to escape. There was a brief vision of himself leaping upon and subduing the two men, and an even more glorious one of him dragging them in by their collars, the bag of money tucked under his arm. *They'd give me five dollars and an afternoon off for that,* he thought.

The two men appeared in the doorway. They were staring at him. He knew now that they had been discussing his fate.

"We could leave him here," the small man said.

"They wouldn't find him for months," Champ said, his eyes regarding Angus thoughtfully, as if measuring him for an ordeal.

"It wouldn't really be murder either."

Angus stared back at the tall man, trying to read his eyes which were small and inscrutable below the dark line of his hat brim.

"We'll decide when I get back," Champ said. "You watch him."

The tall man buttoned and belted his trench coat as carefully as if it were a uniform and left the cabin. They heard his feet scuffling softly, the sounds becoming more and more distant, then inaudible.

"Where is he going?" Angus asked.

"Just down the road to have a look," the small man said. He wandered about the cabin. He was still coatless, the gun still thrust into his belt.

Angus began to whirl desperate ideas through his mind. He was perspiring freely. If they left him there he would be all right; he would be able to get up and walk away after they left. But—he had seen the thought in Champ's eyes—he knew them, could identify them. Would they take the risk then of leaving him when he could possibly extricate himself and incriminate them?

The small man stepped out of the cabin and went to the car. Instantly, purely on impulse, Angus shook the loosened bonds around his wrists to the floor and tried to leap up, his heart hammering, his body hot, wet, but the chair to which he was still tied hobbled him. He swung his arms, and by trying with all his strength to lurch free of the chair, he toppled it over. Rickety to begin with, his weight plus the force of the fall wrenched the chair apart and he was soon up on his feet freeing himself of the rope and the chair's fragments. His sudden freedom was almost unendurable, it called for swift and desperate action, action that he was too terrified even to contemplate.

He heard the slam of a car door. He picked up a chair and pressed himself against the wall next to the door, lifting the chair higher and higher. He saw the small man's shadow roll across the threshold, and then his body, his face—his face startled for the instant and then furious as Angus hurled down the chair, giving him a vicious and intricate smash with it, crumbling him, the small man trying to catch himself in the doorway but missing, collapsing, and the thought burning like static fire in Angus' mind that the small man was merely dazed, not unconscious, and so Angus reached down for the gun, jerking it free as the small man began to turn in protest. Angus drew back, holding the gun on the small man.

And the small man gave him no choice. In the face of the loaded, weighty gun he began to rise, his bruised and snarling face brooking no fears, no threats. Angus fired, once. He was amazed that the gun worked, amazed at the roar, at the commotion it caused in his hand, almost causing him to drop it. And amazed as the small man, halfway to his feet, was hurled back against the doorway, his white shirt suddenly flowing with blood as he

rolled over and flung a ghastly sightless face up to the pale moon that had risen over the trees.

Angus began to tremble. He jumped over the body and ran out into the forest. He almost expected the grotesque moon-cast forest to lunge and thrust at him, but it held back, still, attentive, the stars gathered round the peeping moon like dazzled eyes.

He suddenly became aware of the fast sounds down the road, the sounds of running feet rapping the dark road. He crouched behind the car, holding the immense gun in both hands now, training it on the spot in the dark from where Champ would emerge.

The running became louder, more urgent. A figure began to loom, floating out of the dark. The tall man came across the grass.

"Lou!" he shouted, seeing the small man's stretched and lifeless body in front of the door.

Angus stood up, holding the gun in both hands, not more than five feet from the moving figure that was now cautiously drawing a gun. Angus fired. Champ was sprawled across the ground. It seemed that he had not even fallen, that merely the roar, the smoke had driven him there. Angus peered down, his eyes wide, speculative.

A great hush descended. The forest crooned softly, interminably.

Angus Monroe sat in the police station, neat, shy, pale.

The chief of police was nodding. "You have our deepest sympathy, Mr. Monroe," he was saying. "It must have been a nightmare."

Angus nodded.

"You're lucky you're alive," the bank president said.

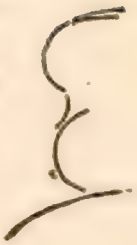
"You say you have no idea where they went?" the chief asked.

"No," Angus said, proceeding to repeat his story. "They knocked me out in the car and the next thing I knew I woke up in the bushes. I do know that they were going to meet someone else, in a cabin somewhere in the woods I believe they said, and, from what I gathered, someone they did not trust very much. From the way they spoke they were anticipating trouble."

"Thieves always fall out," the bank president said righteously.

Angus nodded. But his mind was thinking ahead. Everyone would understand when he resigned his position. The ordeal had been too great. He would go away, far away. He would have everyone's compassion, as well as eleven thousand five....

Hotel is, of course, a compound word derived from "horse" and "tell a friend you spent a pleasant time with us." When the motor car took the place of the horse, the motel arose. Now the mutel—mu as in murder—which the future holds in store for us, will offer the wayfarer some murder.



ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

by Mark Mallory

MacDougald welcomed the opportunity to get away from the house. It was Sunday morning, and the day had loomed drearily before him. Flo, his wife, had been in her usual foul humor all day Saturday, and MacDougald had been trying vainly for weeks to accustom himself to the idea that his mother-in-law was not going to leave. After a three month visit, she was more firmly entrenched in the guest room than ever.

So when the phone rang at seven-fifteen that morning—a business call—MacDougald had been secretly quite pleased, even if it was his day off. This gave him his chance to get out of the house.

It was just past seven-forty now, and MacDougald stood in the court of the Southern Breezes Motel with Harry Starnes, the manager.

"This'll finish me!" Starnes groaned, holding his head between his hands. "It won't make any difference to Mr. Trimble that it was an accident, he'll fire me!"

"I wouldn't know about that, Mr. Starnes," MacDougald said, "but I would like to get my depositions. Now, who—"

"A terrible thing! Perfectly terrible!" Starnes lamented, looking across the shuffleboard court to the flagstone apron of the swimming pool. The woman's body lay there at the edge of the pool in a puddle of water, the doctor from the ambulance still working over her.

Before MacDougald could get the manager's attention again, one of the uniformed policemen walked over to where they stood.

"One of you the manager?" he said.

"I am, officer," Starnes said.

"What was the woman's name?"

Starnes pulled a card from his pocket. "Mrs. Eva Mae Mulberry," he said, handing the registration card to the officer. "The address is on the card."

The cop wrote in his notebook and handed the card back to Starnes.

"You a guest here?" he said to MacDougald.

"I represent the insurance company that carries the motel's liability insurance," MacDougald said.

The cop grinned humorlessly. "Guess they'll nick you for plenty on this." He turned his attention back to Starnes. "You find the body?"

"No. It was that kid over there, the one with the freckles." He pointed toward a small boy who was struggling against the restraining hands of a large, blowzy woman with flaming red hair and who was in a two-piece green sunsuit.

The cop walked over to the boy. "You find this lady, sonny?"

"Uh huh! Gee, I hope she dint bleed in the water or nothin'! I sure wanna go swimmin'!"

The cop sighed, apparently inured to the callousness of young and old. "Do you know what time it was when you found her?"

The boy's mother stepped forward, pushing the youngster behind her. "It was seven o'clock, officer, that Freddie found her because he said he wanted to go swimming and I said okay because I—"

"Lady," the cop sighed again, "mind if the kid answers the question?"

She bristled. "Yes I *do* mind! A thing like this could leave a terrible scar on a child his age! I ought to sue this motel, that's what I ought to do! Imagine, coming out to swim and finding dead bodies!"

"Okay, lady, okay." The cop came back to Starnes. "Nobody saw her when she went in, huh?"

Starnes looked at the body again, as if the entire blame lay with the dead woman herself. "No, officer. She must have gone in the pool early, before I opened the office. It's against the rules, but people don't care about that."

"She checked in alone?"

"That's right. She mentioned that she was going on south this morning."

While the cop looked at his notes, his partner joined them, saying, "Got it all, Joe? They're ready to move her now, and I'm bushed and hungry." He looked at Starnes. "This joint's gonna get a bad name if this keeps up. Second stiff in less'n a year."

Starnes shuddered and turned away. He went into the office and MacDougald followed him. The air conditioned office was comfortable. The two men watched in silence through the window as the attendants put the body in the ambulance. The cops were getting into the patrol car, and the poolside crowd of the curious had broken up into small groups, everyone recounting every detail that he had noticed. A fat woman was

taking pictures of the ambulance with a Brownie camera.

"I'm through, Mr. MacDougald," Starnes said flatly. "Mr. Trimble will be back in town tomorrow and when he finds out about this..." He threw up his hands. "First that Upchurch thing last fall, and now this."

"My company probably won't renew the insurance," MacDougald said. "The other one cost them seventy-five thousand."

He studied Starnes, suddenly feeling sorry for him. The man was probably right about the motel owner firing him. Someone had to be the goat.

"Maybe I'd like it further south," Starnes mused. He looked thoughtfully out at the swimming pool. The freckle-faced boy was splashing about in the shallow end. No one else seemed inclined to go in the water just yet. "I had a job offered me a couple of weeks ago. A new motel going up near Boynton. Hundred and fifty units, right on the beach. I should have taken it then, but you know how it is, loyalty and all that." He scowled. "That don't mean a thing though. Not a thing. I should have realized that."

"You been in the motel business long, Mr. Starnes?" MacDougald said.

"Started in the hotel business, about twenty years ago. After the war, when motels started springing up the way they did, I switched over. Liked the work better because it wasn't so formal."

MacDougald nodded absently. They were quiet for a few moments, watching the boy in the pool.

"How do you suppose it happened?" MacDougald said finally.

"The woman? Mrs. Mulberry?" Starnes shrugged. "I don't know, and I really don't care. Some of these people are so careless. Now what business did she have going in the pool so early?"

MacDougald grunted.

"Anyhow, what difference does it make now?" Starnes said. "She's dead."

MacDougald took out his notebook. "Well, I suppose I'd better get those depositions." He'd hurry up with this so that he could spend most of the rest of the day fishing. Flo and her mother wouldn't like it, but he had his job to do, and he'd let them think that this assignment took up all of Sunday.

"Thing like this is bad for business, you know," Starnes said. "These people will check out of here and spread the thing around. Every time they talk they'll make it sound worse. Before long, anybody that hears what happened will be about as likely to stay overnight in the gas chamber as they would to come here."

"I suppose it doesn't help," MacDougald said.

"I think I'll write that fellow in Boynton today," Starnes said.

As it turned out, Starnes was right about the owner firing him. And the case became routine after the coroner's jury returned a verdict of accidental death by drowning. A short interval passed and the husband of the deceased instituted suit against the Southern Breezes Motel, charging negligence. Damages of one hundred thousand dollars were asked, and the insurance company made an offer for an out-of-court settlement. The offer was declined. The case went to trial and the full amount was awarded. The jurors went home feeling magnanimous.

MacDougald would likely have forgotten the whole thing if he hadn't chanced to get into conversation at lunch one day with an insurance adjustor from the West Coast. The talk got around to motel accidents, and the man from California mentioned a case that had occurred two years before in his territory.

"The woman's husband was awarded eighty thousand," he said. "The motel manager, a fellow named Starnes, was fired."

MacDougald slowly stopped chewing. He laid his fork on his plate. "Did you say—*Starnes*?"

"I believe that was his name. Why?"

Was it possible? MacDougald wondered. The name was certainly not a particularly common one, yet the chances were that this whole thing was pure coincidence.

"No reason in particular, except that I—I went to school with a fellow by that name, and he moved to California a few years ago."

The other man rubbed his chin and thought for a moment. "I believe his name was Harry Starnes. Yes, I'm sure of it!" He grinned. "I'm sure it was Harry, because the man was bald."

Harry Starnes? It was too much to attribute to coincidence now. The name. The fact that he was bald. The fact that he was a motel manager.

In addition to his regular work, MacDougald began a quiet investigation of Harry Starnes. Through the bonding company, he obtained the names of every place for whom Starnes had worked for the past twenty years. The first fruit of this information was confirmation that the Harry Starnes he knew was the same Starnes that the adjustor from California had been talking about.

According to the bonding company's investigation, Starnes was of good character, honest, but with a penchant for moving about. He had worked at a total of eighteen different hotels and motels, scattered from coast to coast.

MacDougald began to bring his work home. The backtracking was slow and painstaking.

"Why don't they hire somebody to help you?" Flo demanded one night. "You bring work home with you every night. You never take mother and me out anywhere! What do they think you are down at that lousy insurance office? A work horse?"

"With three mouths to feed," he answered dryly, "I've got to work harder."

"Are you complaining about mother?"

"It just seems that some of your brothers or sisters could help out," MacDougald said weakly.

"I don't want to hear any more of that kind of talk!" Flo shrilled, and marched heavily out of the room.

He traced Starnes back to 1948. It was astounding! He had entirely eliminated chance now. At every place where Starnes had been employed—a total of eleven motels in those ten years—there had been at least one fatal accident involving a guest during Starnes' tenure of employment. In three of them, there had been two completely unrelated fatalities.

Try as he might, MacDougald could establish no connection between any of the persons who had died. They were from widely separated sections of the country, of widely varying backgrounds. There was no conceivable connection between them.

But there had to be an answer to the puzzle. And slowly, as MacDougald worried over it, the answer emerged. The connection wasn't in the people themselves, but in the *reason* for their deaths. By now, he was certain that their deaths hadn't resulted from accidents, and he was equally certain that Starnes was no homicidal maniac. The explanation for the "accidental" deaths was fantastic when MacDougald finally arrived at it, but fantastic or not, it was inescapable. Unquestionably, Harry Starnes was a professional freelance killer.

The advantages of his operation were many. For one thing, the life insurance on the deceased was usually paid promptly, and more often than not, being accidental death, the policies paid double indemnity. Secondly, in every case a large lawsuit had followed and in all cases a large settlement was made. However Starnes made his connections, they were nebulous enough so that they would be all but impossible to prove. The only possible upset was just what had occurred, the chance stumbling on Starnes' career by someone like MacDougald.

MacDougald pushed back from the desk in his small den and smiled wearily. His watch told him that it was well after midnight, but he had reached his goal.

He assembled all the information, placed it in a folder and

locked it in his brief case. He would confront Starnes with it.

The following day, MacDougald called the Southern Breezes Motel and asked about Harry Starnes.

"I'm not sure where he is, sir," said the new manager, "but you might check with a new motel down in Boynton. A place called the Bel Aire."

Boynton was only two hundred miles outside his territory, but MacDougald was certain Starnes felt himself in no danger and would be there for a time. So he waited until his next swing through his territory carried him close to Boynton, and he took one day to follow through on what he'd found out about Starnes. The feeling of anticipation was high in him, and he experienced the satisfying glow that the culmination to a great deal of painstaking work can give one.

He recognized Starnes immediately when he stopped at the motel office.

Starnes looked at him, vaguely at first, and then with a momentary flicker of uneasiness. Quickly, he recovered his composure.

"Why, it's Mr. MacDougald! I didn't realize Boynton was in your territory."

"It isn't. And I'm sure this place doesn't carry its insurance with my company. There's something, however, I'd like to discuss with you. Let's go somewhere where we won't be disturbed, Mr. Starnes."

In the privacy of one of the motel rooms, MacDougald laid out his impressive array of incriminating documents. Starnes' face became grimmer with each new disclosure. He was perspiring freely when MacDougald finished.

"I must say, Mr. MacDougald, you have been thorough."

"Thank you, Mr. Starnes. However, there is one thing that puzzles me," MacDougald said. "Why didn't you change your name as you moved on from one job to another. That was how I got onto you."

Starnes shrugged and smiled weakly. "Why change my name? There was never any direct blame on me. They were all—accidents. I had to have references. I had to have a social security account. And I couldn't have been bonded if there was no way for the bonding company to trace me. Have to be bonded, you know. These big motels can't just have anybody handling their money."

MacDougald nodded. "Makes sense," he admitted.

"Well," Starnes sighed. "I suppose now we go into the office while you call the police?"

"The police?" MacDougald's brow furrowed, perplexed. "The thought never entered my mind, Mr. Starnes. I came to discuss my wife and mother-in-law with you. I thought that under the circumstances, I might be entitled to some special consideration . . ."

It is only fitting that I should publish an occasional story concerning suburbia, its trim lawns, uncluttered lines and substantial mortgages. Naturally, something must be done to disturb the usual tranquillity. Our story has taken the easy way out—it brings murder to the community.

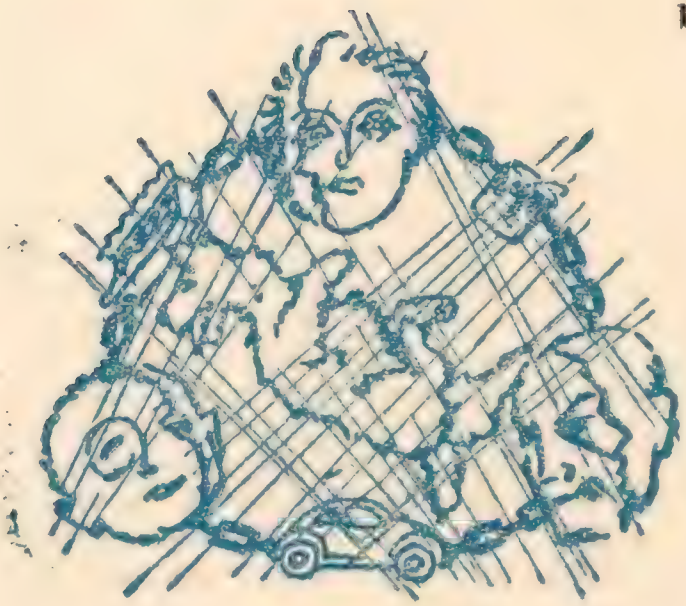
We're Really Not That Kind of People

It was on a Sunday afternoon, I remembered, that Blackie was poisoned. I remembered that the morning had been cold, with a high fog, as it can be in the San Francisco Bay region even in midsummer. Peggy and I had invited the deKadts over for a picnic barbecue, and the anticipation of the event was a big thing for our eight-year-old, Sue. Sue was disappointed as only an eight-year-old can be, at the prospect of having the barbecue inside. But then the fog burned off about noon, I remembered, and it was just right for the barbecue, not hot, not cold, the kind of a day on which we Californians like tourists to arrive. ("Nice day?" we say casually. "Hadn't noticed. It's like this all the time.")

Lucille and Carl deKadt were our neighbors across the grapestake fence to the south. They made a good pair; Carl was slow, plump and easy going, while Lucille was a slender, hard-driving redhead—pretty, too, though personally I go more for a girl like Peggy, with a little more meat on the bones and a disposition that allows you to relax occasionally.

Carl and Lucille brought Herb Berry to the barbecue. Herb was Carl's cousin, down from Sacramento for the weekend. Herb was down pretty often, but not, I figured, to see Carl; Lucille was a terrific cook, and Herb was both

by Samuel W. Taylor



a big guy with a hearty appetite and a bachelor.

After eating, I went across the grapestake fence for a game of horseshoes, Lucille and I standing Herb and Carl. We were tied at 12-all, when Sue came through the gate.

"Daddy, Blackie's sick," the child said. "Mommy wants you to come look at him."

"Okay, soon as we finish the game."

Lucille and I were leading, 18-16, when Peggy came to the fence. "George, I think you'd better come and look at Blackie." There was a quiet urgency to her voice; so I left without finishing the game.

Blackie was lying in his corner of the carport. He was a small dog, part poodle and part wirehair, ugly enough to be cute. He lay there panting, and every little while he would twitch and moan a little. He had been chewing his tongue.

When I got the dog down to the animal hospital on El Camino, the vet shook his head. "Nothing can be done. We'll make him comfortable."

We'd had Blackie since before Sue was born. I let out a long, weary sigh. "I'll stay," I said.

I didn't get home until past ten o'clock. When I came in, Peggy met my eye, then ducked her head. I began to swear, which is a man's impotent reaction to a

woman's tears. "I'd just like to know who would do a trick like that!"

"No, George," Peggy said. "We don't want to know."

Maybe she was right; Peggy generally was. We didn't want to know who such people were. People like us didn't want to think such people existed. Blackie had been a friendly little dog; it had been impossible to keep him in shape, because everybody in the neighborhood fed him.

Next morning we told Sue that Blackie must have been hit by a car. Peggy and I decided we didn't want another dog; not for awhile, anyhow, and particularly not if there was a poisoner in the neighborhood. Maybe, we thought, we'd get a kitten for Sue. A cat would take care of the gophers that kept making mounds in Peggy's flower beds.

Looking back, thinking about it as I lay awake nights, I figured that poisoning the dog was the first step in the plan to kill me. But if anyone had told me such a thing, at the time, I would have laughed in his face. Who, me? What had I ever done, to make somebody want to murder me? What could anyone conceivably gain by my death? It was preposterous. Things like that didn't happen to managers of the local units of Fit-All Shoe Stores. I wasn't chasing anybody else's wife. I didn't play the ponies or hit the bottle. I wasn't involved in the sort of things that can lead to violence, and I didn't even know the sort of people who were. George Granger, 1138 College Avenue, Woodside Heights, was just another guy in the row, having a nice wife and a healthy mortgage; one child and a nervous septic tank; paying on a car, furniture, refrigerator, power mower, insurance and dental bills; a couple of E bonds tucked away and gophers in the petunias—there were a thousand like me in Woodside Heights alone. People don't go around murdering average guys.

But what if it wasn't me at all, but Peggy who was the intended victim? Quiet, lovely Peggy—oh, but that was crazy. Of course it was crazy, and that's what kept me awake nights. Perhaps it was even Sue who was the intended victim. What insane person might be plotting the death of your wife or an eight-year-old child? I would lie there remembering every little detail, trying to pick out the significant thing that might help in meeting this situation.

I remembered that when I got home Saturday, Peggy told me that Lucille had finally got Carl started on painting their house. Lucille had been at him for a year or more about it, but easy-going Carl could be stubborn when it came to unnecessary exertion. He didn't get much done, Peggy said.

Every time she looked across the grapestake fence, she'd see Carl taking his ease atop the ladder, leisurely smoking a cigarette while gently stirring the bucket of paint.

"Not a hair out of place, shoes shined, trousers pressed" Peggy said, laughing. "Lucille spent more energy keeping him at it, than he put into the painting. She'll never change that guy. Why does she keep trying?"

Carl was a pretty good insurance man. He had an air of calm confidence, coupled with an utter lack of a sense of humor, which enabled him to deliver a fund of bromides and platitudes with sincerity. He didn't have much push, but Lucille had enough for both of them; she kept a record of his calls, and saw to it that he made them.

"Lucille ought to get Herb to come down to help," I said, "or Carl can take all summer on that job."

"She said something's wrong with Herb's car. He's coming later on the bus."

Herb Berry arrived that evening, and Lucille drove in to the bus station in the VW to bring him out. "With Herb here, they'll finish the house tomorrow," Peggy said. Herb was a big guy who liked exercise, but didn't get much chance for it. Ten years ago or so he'd been a professional baseball player, and had spent a couple of seasons in the big leagues. Now he was in real estate at Sacramento.

Next morning they were at work before sunup. I heard them banging away with scaffolds and buckets while we were in bed, their voices clear and strident in the quiet of the morning. By the time we sat down to breakfast, they had painted almost the entire side of the house which faced us across the grapestake fence. Carl's blond hair was mussed now, and he was splattered with paint, trying to keep up with Herb and Lucille. She was on the scaffold with the two men, slapping on paint.

I was pouring coffee when Herb Berry let out a yell, and I looked up just as the tall man took a header off the scaffold with the main paint bucket in his hand. Lucille screamed. Then Herb stood up into view on the other side of the fence with paint on him from head to foot, and began laughing. At this point, I realized I'd poured coffee onto Peggy's clean tablecloth.

"On you it looks good!" I called out the window to Herb.

He climbed onto the scaffold and began rubbing himself on the side of the house, using his clothing and hair as a paint brush. Carl howled with laughter. Lucille told Carl to go downtown for some more paint—they carried it at the Plaza drugstore which would be open on Sunday—while

she washed the paint out of Herb's hair.

A bit later Carl came over. "My VW won't start," he said. "Can I borrow your car to run downtown?"

I gave him the keys. "This will teach you to get one of those foreign jobs."

"But it never happened before; she just won't start."

He turned to the carport, and I went back to breakfast. I remembered that I picked up the coffee cup as he slammed the car door. I took a sip and was putting the cup down, when there was a big grunt and something shoved me. It was like being caught in an ocean breaker. The table was picked up and flung upside down across the room, and I remembered seeing the coffee maker narrowly miss Peggy's head as she fell backwards. I was thrown against the stove with my heels higher than my head. Every window of the kitchen was blown out, the roof lifted so a rim of daylight showed around it, and the entire wall adjoining the carport was sprung inwards. But for all that, Sue sat exactly where she had been, her spoon raised half to her mouth. An explosion can do freak things, and it had completely passed the child by.

My memory isn't too clear about the next few minutes. I was pretty groggy, and my ears rang. Peggy helped me up, and there was a line of blood beginning to run down her cheek (only a scratch; boy, were we lucky). From outside came shouts and running feet as the neighbors gathered. Then somebody began shaking the kitchen door, but the explosion had jammed it shut.

"Are you all right in there, George?" It was Bert Miles' round face and heavy shock of curly hair at the window. He was our neighbor on the other side.

"I guess so. How are you, Peggy?"

Peggy seemed very young at the moment. She was like the slim girl with the brown hair and the big gray eyes who sat beside me a full quarter in Psychology 61 (we were seated alphabetically; her name was Grove, mine Granger) before I scraped up enough courage to ask her for a date. "I'm all right," she said to Bert Miles. "And thank heavens Sue wasn't even—"

"They're okay in here," Bert Miles called. "George and Peggy and Sue."

"George and Peggy and Sue?" someone asked. "Then who was in the car when she blew up? Who got blasted to pieces?"

And then, from somewhere, I heard Lucille scream, "Carl!"

The casket was closed at the funeral. I guess there wasn't much

left of the mortal remains of Carl deKadt. Mr. Wheeler of the sheriff's office, who investigated, had decided that a bundle of dynamite had been placed under the front seat, wired to the starter. Carl got in, slammed the door, inserted the key, turned it on to engage the starter, and had been killed instantly. At least he didn't suffer. Poor Carl. And but for chance, I thought, as they lowered his casket into the grave, there go I. It wasn't intended for him. Thank you, Carl, but why did it have to be?

This is the sort of thing that can interfere with your sleep. In another couple of hours we would have gone out to the car, Peggy, Sue and I, all dressed up for Sunday school. Except that Lucille had finally gotten Carl started on the painting, except that Herb's car was in the garage and that Carl's VW wouldn't start, except that Herb had fallen off the scaffold with the paint so that Carl borrowed my Dodge to get some more . . .

On the way home from the funeral Peggy suddenly said, "That's why Blackie was poisoned. They got rid of the dog, so they could fix our car in the night while we slept."

I drove back rapidly, wondering about Sue, whom we'd left with a sitter. It was good to find the child all right.

This was something that had been planned ahead. No telling what would happen next.

The following day, Peggy went to town and got another dog, a small, excitable type of mutt such as Blackie had been. Sue was delighted with the new pet, particularly delighted that this was a dog we could have in the house. We had a reason for that. A dog in the house can't be poisoned at night.

Next day I got a letter at the store. It had been mailed locally. The envelope looked like something Sue might have done with scissors and paste, my name and address composed of printed letters and numbers cut from a newspaper. The note inside was the same sort of a paste-up. It said,

You were lucky. But next time it will be you and your wife and kid.

Mr. Wheeler of the sheriff's office said he doubted that another attempt would be made in the same manner. He was a lean man with four of his front teeth form a bridge, and not too good a one. He had a habit of eating soda mint tablets and a passion for questions that might very well uncover a motive for someone wanting to kill me.

But I told him a dozen times, "There isn't any motive. It's a crazy person. Goofy. Nuts. An oddball character."

Mr. Wheeler kept saying he doubted it, and kept popping soda mint tablets into his mouth. "Give it some thought, Mr. Granger. This is not a crime of impulse. Someone has a very good reason."

Fathead! My estimate, at the moment, of Mr. Wheeler.

Have you ever had your picture on the front page and seen your name in a newspaper streamer? Have you been pointed out on the street, pestered by busy-bodies, avoided by people who don't want to get too close until the dust settles? Have you ever had the feeling of standing apart, thinking that this guy isn't you, can't be you, because he isn't that sort of a guy and just doesn't fit the part?

But it was real enough. Particularly at night, when you woke up.

The workmen were repairing the house. I had to deal with the insurance people about this and about getting another car. It was enough to interfere with anybody's sleep. And as I lay awake in the night, I thought back over every detail of what had happened, and back and back into the past trying to get hold of something that could have made it happen. Everybody has enemies, Mr. Wheeler had said. Everybody has something another person wants, or wanted. Everybody has hurt somebody.

Tom Stone? He had been my rival for Peggy, and it had been a pretty bitter competition. Tom had threatened to get me, if it was the last thing he ever did. But he'd also promised to wait for Peggy, and he'd married Alice Duke within six months. That was eleven years ago; Tom and Alice now had four kids.

Henry Traut had been assistant manager of the first Fit-All Store I worked in, and I'll never forget his sly grin the night he showed me how to beat the store. With two of us working together, he said, we could clean up. When I turned down the proposition, I knew he was out to get me. He turned in bad reports to the boss about me, yet somehow I couldn't bring myself to squeal on him. I was thinking of quitting, when Traut was caught with his hand in the till. He swore he'd get me for squealing on him, but that was a long time ago, back before I got married—in fact, I proposed to Peggy on the strength of getting Traut's job. Could a thing like that fester this long? I'd never seen Traut since he was fired.

At the local store, I'd finally had to lower the boom on one of the most respectable housewives in town, Lydia Primrose, whose husband was on the city council, because of shoplifting. I didn't see why I should outfit her family with free shoes. The thing was settled quietly, but certainly both she and her husband would be glad if I were dead.

There had been a few hassels at the service club, where I was chairman of the committee of admissions. In particular, I had kept Phil Buckwalter out of the club year after year, despite his prominence, wealth, influence, and driving desire to be a member, and despite charges that I was acting from personal spite and malice. The plain fact was that Buckwalter's place of business was a clip joint, something which I couldn't prove nor openly charge, but which made me keep him out of the club, one way or another.

Lying awake nights, if you put your mind to it, it's amazing to find how many toes you've stepped on. Slights, affronts, arguments, flareups. Things you quickly put from mind, until you're digging back through memory in search of someone who let it fester.

The fellow businessmen who dropped by to say hello, the members of the Main Street Improvement Association, the people who came to my church, the associates in the service club, the neighbors—they didn't know that every time I said hello I wondered if this is the one? The cashier of the lunch counter, the janitor of the building, my bookkeeper, assistant manager, clerks—some one of you is out to kill me and my family. Mr. Wheeler of the sheriff's office was trying to find out why. Hell, all I cared about was who. I'd find out why later.

I'd had a little hassel with the guy across the street, who had a habit of backing out of his driveway into mine, to make his turn into the narrow street easier. I didn't mind his backing into the driveway, but I did object to him missing it and running over my ivy; so Fred Lacey and I had had words. I'd run over the cat of a guy who used to live down the block, and that had caused words. Could it have grown with him, even though he'd moved away and I'd forgotten his name? And of course we hadn't spoken to Loris Neilsson, since he'd threatened to shoot Blackie for walking on his new lawn; but, then, nobody in the neighborhood spoke to Loris.

These things couldn't grow to premeditated murder. Or could they? From what I'd read, most people got killed over small things—a slight, an argument, loss of face, an affront, avarice over a few dollars. Looking at it that way, there might be many people plotting my death, including Peggy, who might do it for the insurance.

Peggy wasn't getting her sleep, either. Her face got drawn and her big gray eyes bigger. We'd tried to keep it from Sue, but once it hit the headlines she got it from her playmates. What was it like for her, knowing someone was plotting her death, or the death of her mother and father? Childhood is filled with terrors anyhow.

"George, I just don't know what

to do," Peggy said, speaking quietly as we both lay awake in the night.

"I've put in for transfer. It shouldn't be hard; a lot of managers are anxious to get a store in California."

"What will this do to your advancement?"

It wouldn't help it. "I don't think that's the important thing, right now."

She said, "You should withdraw that application. Really you—"

"Honey, I'm no hero. I just want to walk away from this."

"But here at least we are among people we know. And all the people here are thinking, wondering who's doing this."

"Sure—and one of them *knows*."

'And the police. They're working on it—the sheriff's office out here, the city police because you got the letter at the store in town, and now it's a Federal case because they used the mails. This is our protection, George, to be here where so many are helping. It's all we've got. We simply have to hold faith in it."

"Okay," I said. "I'll withdraw the application."

She was right. And, come right down to it, there was no such thing as running away from this.

We adapted, as best we could. I came home each day for lunch, just to check up, instead of eating in town. Sue no longer rode the school bus. Peggy took her to school and picked her up. I had my deer rifle loaded and ready, on the shelf of the entry hall closet. Sue, I noticed, no longer watched the horse operas, whodunits and other shows of violence on TV which she had been so fascinated with just a week ago. I don't know whether it was because they were a pale comparison with the real thing, or whether the child was too edgy to want to be reminded of the real thing; a kid won't tell what's eating her.

When I arrived home for lunch Saturday, neighbors were milling about the house, everybody talking about the poisoned chocolates. "I told Peggy not to worry you over the phone," Lucille said. The newly-widowed redhead looked bad. Lucille was the nervous type anyhow, who took everything big, and she'd been living on coffee and cigarettes for the six days since Carl had been killed. Tragedy had stalked her. Lucille's first husband had been killed in a car wreck; her second had been shot while deer hunting; and now Carl—all three killed accidently. I felt awfully sorry for her, Carl dying with the bomb intended for me.

The neighbors filled me in about the chocolates, talking all at once. Peggy had been helping Lucille sort the contents of Lucille's house. There were things the moving van would take to Sacramento, where Herb Berry had gotten her a job in the office of the real

estate outfit where he worked; there was stuff for the Goodwill truck; there were things that would go with the house, which Lucille had put up for sale; and there was just a lot of accumulated junk that had to be sorted out and hauled to the county dump.

The two women had taken a mid-morning break and were having a cup of coffee at my place when the mail arrived. There was a package addressed like the anonymous letter had been, a paste-up of printed characters cut from a newspaper. Lucille had warned Peggy not even to open it, fearing a bomb or something. She'd called Mr. Wheeler at the sheriff's office, who had come out and taken the package. Just before I got home for lunch, he'd phoned that it contained chocolates filled with lead arsenate, the stuff used to spray trees.

I phoned Wheeler myself, and he didn't seem too excited. "A clumsy attempt," he said professionally. This was all in the day's work for him. "The address being the same style as the poison pen note—and you should have seen those chocolates, all gooked up, the white powder spilling out of some of them—it wouldn't have fooled a baby."

"Great deduction," I said acidly. "But what if Peggy had been over to Lucille's, and Sue had opened the package? The kid would be dead by now!"

"There's no use shouting, Mr. Granger," he advised me.

Fatheads, incompetents, parasites on the public purse. I told him exactly what I thought of him and the entire sheriff's office, after, of course, I had hung up.

This was like life in the jungle. You never went downwind. You approached each thicket with the expectation that it might contain an ambush.

Trouble was, I wasn't used to the jungle. I didn't know how to survive in it.

Herb Berry arrived from Sacramento in the afternoon, to help Lucille with the packing. Since her house was torn up, they came over to our place for dinner. And he spent the night with us. It was good to have Herb around. He was a big guy, a former athlete, plenty husky and capable. He'd taken care of all the funeral arrangements and estate details for Lucille.

After Sue was in bed, I broke out a bottle and we relaxed. We all needed it. I took a couple too many, as a matter of fact, and it was wonderful to feel great and not to give a damn, even if it would mean a hangover in the morning. I hadn't realized that Herb could be such a clown when he got a snootful, and Lucille really let loose for once. She'd had her cry, and now she was breaking the tension with a laugh. When the redhead and the big ex-base-

ball player got into high gear, I laughed until my ribs hurt. Peggy didn't really enjoy the time we were having for ourselves, but then she never takes more than one drink. Personally, I was glad to see Lucille unwind after the tragedy. She'd been keyed up like a fiddle string, and I'd been afraid she'd snap.

Next morning I was over helping Lucille and Herb with the packing, when Peggy called from the grapestake fence. She and Sue were going to Sunday school, and she'd left the sprinkler on the petunias. Would I turn it off in fifteen minutes?

Okay, I told her. But I forgot the water until an hour or so later. Oh, well, it wouldn't hurt the petunias to get a good soaking.

While I was at the house, I decided to warm up the coffee from breakfast. I felt pretty rocky from the night before. I turned the gas on under the coffee, then looked for last night's paper, which I hadn't had a chance to read yet. Peggy never let papers lie around, and sure enough I found it in the wastebasket. I took it out, opened it, and a shower of paper bits fluttered to the floor like confetti. Somebody had been whacking at the paper with a pair of scissors. It looked like something a kid would do, just to be cutting, but I knew it wasn't Sue, and it wasn't just to be cutting.

The newspaper had been uncut at breakfast. I'd been hoping to look at it while Herb was shaving, but Lucille had come over just then. The paper hadn't been cut until after I went with Lucille and Herb to help with the packing.

All at once I knew. Peggy had done it.

The last person in the world. The very last person. Peggy. Why? Insurance? A boy friend? What? Romance with the choir leader at church? Clandestine meetings at the super market, wandering down the aisles with their carts? Stolen kisses behind the door of the Sunday school classroom, assignations in the poison oak and redwoods of the hills? Oh, it was possible. Love will find a way. But it didn't fit Peggy, not at all.

Or did it?

What did I know about Peggy, really? What does any man know about his wife? She was sweet, she was lovely—okay, but so were wives who had affairs and laced the morning coffee of their husbands with arsenic. No husband would ever be poisoned, or done in by his wife's lover, if he suspected such a thing might happen.

There was a sudden hiss as the coffee pot boiled over. *Peggy.* I poured myself a cup. *Peggy.* Then as I took a mouthful of the scalding stuff, it woke me up. I put the newspaper in the wastebasket

and went across the grapestake fence to help Lucille and Herb with the packing.

They were in the attic, sorting things. I worked downstairs. I was putting the pictures from the living room walls into a box when the doorbell rang. "Will you get it, George?" Lucille called from the attic.

"Okay." I went to the front door.

"Special delivery for Mr. Herbert Berry."

"I'll give it to him."

The letter was addressed with characters cut from a newspaper and pasted on the envelope. It had been mailed locally; the postmark was not an hour old. Peggy had mailed it, I knew, on the way to Sunday school. But why to Herb?

"Bring it up, will you, George?" Herb's voice asked from overhead. He'd heard, then. I'd have to give it to him. Well, why not? He didn't know about Peggy; only I knew.

I went into the back hall, up the stepladder and through the trapdoor into the attic. Herb and Lucille were over in a corner, sorting the contents of a trunk.

"Maybe the boss has sold that Gresham property," Herb said. His big hand reached for the envelope, then froze as he saw the way it was addressed. Lucille sucked in her breath sharply, plainly more high strung than ever. Slowly they looked at each other, their faces a dead white—Herb's beard black in contrast, Lucille's freckles standing out sharply.

Suddenly she snatched the envelope, ripped it open and unfolded the letter within. "It's a lie!" she cried.

Herb's voice was tightly hoarse. "Who sent it?"

"Peggy—who else?" Lucille said. So she knew. Soon it would be headlines for everybody to know—wife plots husband's death. "Peggy knew about us," Lucille was saying. "Carl was a trusting oaf. George here couldn't guess. Men are fools. But you can't trick a woman about something like that. If Peggy didn't know before, she could see it last night, when we drank too much," Lucille said to Herb. "She knows how we feel about each other."

I saw it then. The whole thing.

"Shut up, you fool!" Herb grabbed her shoulders, and I knew it wasn't the first time he'd laid his big paws on her. Herb Berry hadn't been making those week-end trips from Sacramento just for Lucille's cooking. Why had I been so blind? A real estate man's best time is the week end; he does most of his business on Saturdays and Sundays.

"Keep your mouth shut!" Herb warned her.

"If she knows, *he* knows," Lucille snapped. "They're married." Angrily, she tossed the letter spin-

ning to the floor. I saw the message, pasted from newspaper letters: *Carl was her third husband. You're next, chump.*

"They cooked this up together!" Lucille shrieked at Herb.

Herb turned to me. I hadn't realized, really, what an enormous guy he was. He was a full head taller, and he would outweigh me by almost a hundred pounds.

"How about it, buster?" he asked me.

I could have told him everything, right then. Carl deKadt had been an insurance man, and an insurance man is always his best customer. They'd killed him for the insurance. The bomb in the car never was intended for me. It was like the first letter and the poisoned chocolates, to make it appear that I was the intended victim, to make Carl's death seem merely an accident. Everything had been planned—Blackie's death, Herb falling off the scaffold, the VW that wouldn't start. The chocolates never were intended to harm us. The paste-up address was warning enough, and in addition they were clumsily prepared, the lead arsenate spilling out of them. And Lucille had been on deck when they were delivered, just in case.

It was all so clear, but, confronted with the big man, I said, "I don't know what you're talking about, Herb."

"They know," he said to her. It must have showed on my face. "I told you something would happen!" he yelled at her.

Lucille, who tipped the beam at 102, was the strong one now. "Okay, and what can they prove?" she told the big guy towering over her. "There are lots of things that people know that they don't talk about." She indicated me. "Remind him not to talk, Herb. Give him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry. Let him know we're playing for keeps."

It was somehow hard to believe even as I eased around among the boxes and trunks, ducked behind a stack of old newspapers, slipped to the sewing machine, sprang to the dress form, darted to the wood-burning stove, that Herb Berry was implacably pursuing me, his long arms spread wide, herding me toward a corner. Herb was a friend. My association with him had involved playing horseshoes, eating barbecue steaks, sharing tall drinks, spinning yarns. Just the night before we'd had a hilarious evening together over a bottle. He'd slept overnight as my guest. And now he was pursuing me, heading me back into a corner of the attic as I darted from one thing to another among the accumulated junk.

He had been a professional athlete, and he was relaxed now as an athlete is, waiting for his chance, while I spent myself rushing about. Peggy of course had no

way of knowing that her little trick, done all on her own, would lead to this. All she had undoubtly intended was getting a couple of murderers out of our hair. I tensed, knowing that when Herb made his move, it would count.

I wasn't going to be trapped in that corner. But when I made my break he was expecting it, and he lunged for me with that swift ease of the athlete. I knew I couldn't make that trapdoor. And then I did the sort of thing I used to do as a youngster, the last trick of a kid pursued by a bigger kid. I flung sideways to the floor, sticking out a leg to trip him.

His big foot kicked into my calf, and I thought my leg was broken. He yelled, then, a single hoarse shriek, as he sprawled toward the open trapdoor. I heard him crash into the stepladder below, and then hit the floor with a sodden thud. I crawled to the trapdoor. When I looked down from the rim, I just felt, judging from the way he was lying, that he must be dead.

Kneeling beside him was Mr. Wheeler of the sheriff's office, and I was also surprised to see the two uniformed men who were below in the hallway. "Lucky I wasn't climbing that ladder when he dived through," Mr. Wheeler said. He arose, and put a soda mint into his mouth. "That saves the state the expense of a trial for one of them." He looked up. "The woman's up there?"

"Yes," I said.

"What people won't do for money. You've got a smart wife, Mr. Granger. When she phoned this morning that the pair of them were in love, it straightened out my thinking. The whole thing came in focus—make us look at you while they walked away with the loot. Are you all right?"

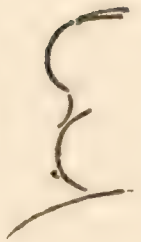
"Yes, I'm okay," I said.

At least, I thought I was.

Every Sunday

Don't miss the most unusual and exciting suspense television show of the week—ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS. Every Sunday. Check your favorite TV program-guide for the time this top-rated mystery show reaches your area.

Imagination can conjure up so many interesting items: a boy with green hair, a purple cow, or even a yellow stool pigeon. It is, therefore, not too surprising to have a murdered young lady who feels obliged to track down the one responsible for her abrupt demise.



AFTER a strangely timeless interval, Janet realized she was dead.

She experienced only a little shock, and no fear. Perhaps this was because of the carefree way she had conducted her past life.

She had never felt so free. A thought wave her propulsion, she zipped about the great house, then outside, toward the great, clean open sky. Above, the stars were ever so bright and beautiful. Below, the lights of the suburban estate where she had been born and reared shone as if to answer the stars.

Janet was delighted with the whole experience. It confirmed some of the beliefs she had held, and it is always nice for one to have one's beliefs confirmed. It also excited the vivacious curiosity which had always been one of her major traits. And now there were ever so many more things about which to be curious.

She returned to the foyer of the house and looked at her lifeless physical self lying at the base of the wide sweeping stairway.

Whillikers, I was a very good looking hunk of female, she decided. *Really I was.*

The body at the foot of the stairway was slender, clad in a simple black dinner dress. The wavy mass of black hair had spilled to rest fanwise on the carpet. The soft lovely face was calm —as in innocent, dreamless sleep.

Only the awkward twist and weird angle of the slim neck revealed the true nature of the sleep.

A quick ache smote Janet. *I must accept things. This—this is really so wonderful, but I do wish I—she—could have had just a little more time . . .*

The great house was silent. Lights blazing on death, on stillness.

Janet remembered. She had returned unexpectedly to change shoes. Getting out of the car at the country club, she had snagged the heel of her left shoe and loosened it.

"I'll only be a little while," she had promised Cricket and Tom and Blake.

"We'll wait dinner," Blake had said, after she'd waved aside his insistence that he drive her home.

At home again, she had reached the head of the stairs when she heard someone in her bedroom.

She'd always possessed a cool nerve. She'd eased down the hall-

by Talmage Powell

way. He'd been in there. Murgy. Dear old Murgy. Life hadn't begun without the memory of Murgy. He was ageless. He had worked for the family forever. Murgatroyd had been as much a part of Janet's life as the house, the giant oaks on the lawn, the car in the garage, over which Murgy lived in his little apartment.

She simply hadn't understood at first. Crouched in the hallway and peering through the crack of the partially-opened door, she had seen a brand new Murgy. This one had a chill face, but eyes that burned with determination. This one moved with much more deftness and decisiveness than the Murgy she'd always known.

He was stealing her jewelry. He was taking it from the small wall safe and replacing paste replicas. They were excellent replicas. They must have cost Murgy a great deal of money. But whatever the cost, it was pennies compared to the fortune he was slipping under his jacket.

She saw him compare a fake

diamond bracelet with the real thing. The fakes were so good, she might have gone for years without knowing a large portion of her inheritance had been replaced by them.

As she saw the genuine diamond bracelet disappear into his pocket, she had gasped his name.

He had responded like a man jerking from a jolt of electricity. Frightened, she had turned, run. He had caught her at the head of the stairs.

She had tried to tell him how much his years of service meant, that she would have given him a chance to explain, a chance to straighten the thing out.

But he had given *her* no chance. He had pushed savagely at her with both arms. She had fallen, crying out, trying to grab something to break the fall.

She had struck hard. There had been one blinding flash, mingled with pain.

Murgy had followed her down. He had stood looking at her, wiping his hands on a handkerchief. He had listened, and heard no sound. She had come alone. Everything was all right. Even the heel on her left shoe had come off during her fall.

Murgy's decision was plain in his face. He would go to his quarters. Let her be discovered. Let her death be considered an accident.

Janet broke away from the study of what had once been her body.

Murgy, you really shouldn't have done it. There is a balance in the order of things and you have upset it. There is only one way you can restore the balance, Murgy. You must pay for what you have done. Besides, my freedom won't be complete until you do.

Janet was aware of a presence in the foyer.

Cricket had entered. Cricket and Tom and Blake, wondering why she hadn't returned, beginning to worry, deciding to see what was keeping her.

A willowy blonde girl, not too intelligent, but kind and eager to please, Cricket saw the body at the base of the stairway. She put her fists to her temples and opened her mouth wide.

Janet rushed to her side. In her world of silence, she couldn't hear Cricket screaming, but she knew that was what she was doing. Cricket's merry blue eyes were not merry now. They strained against their sockets with a terrible intensity.

Poor Cricket. I'm not in pain, Cricket.

She tried to touch Cricket with the touch of compassion.

Cricket wasn't aware of this effort, Janet knew instantly. She wasn't here, as far as Cricket was concerned. She would never again be here for Cricket, or for any of the others.

Blake and Tom were beside

Cricket now. Tom was helping her to a deep couch. Blake was taking slow, halting steps toward the body at the foot of the stairs.

Blake kneeled beside the young, dead body. He reached as if he would touch it. Then his hands fell to his sides. He rose, his dark, handsome face pained.

He turned, stumbled to Tom and Cricket. Cricket had subsided into broken sobs. Tom sat with his arms about her shoulders. Shock and fright made the freckles on Tom's lean, pale face stand out sharply.

They were discussing the discovery. Janet could feel their horror, their sorrow. She could sense it, almost touch it. It were as if she could almost reach the edges of their essence, of their being, with her own essence and being.

Blake was picking up the telephone now. This would be for the doctor.

Before the doctor arrived, Murgy came in. Janet strained toward him. Then she recoiled, as from a thing dark and slimy.

He was speaking. *Saying he had heard a scream, no doubt.*

Then Blake stepped from in front of Murgy. And Murgy looked toward the stairs.

Cosmic pulsations passed through Janet as she slipped along with Murgy to the body at the stairway.

She could feel the fine control deep within him, the crouching of the dark, slimy thing as, in its wanton determination to survive, it braced the flesh and ordered the brain and arranged the emotions.

The emotions were in such a storm that Janet drew back.

Murgy went to his knees beside the body and wept openly. *There was Blake now, helping Murgy to a chair. Everything was so dreadfully out of balance.*

She tried to get through to Blake. She strained with the effort. She succeeded only in causing Blake to look at Murgy a little strangely, as if something in Murgy's grief struck a small discord in Blake.

Blake went to fetch Murgy a glass of water. Janet turned her attention to Cricket and Tom. Tom's mind was resilient and strong. She battered at the edges of it, but it was too full of other things. Memories. Janet could vaguely sense them. Memories that somehow concerned her and the good times their young crowd had had.

Cricket was simply blank. Shocked beyond thinking.

Janet perched over the front doorway and beheld the scene in its entirety.

Look, people. He did it. Murgy's a murderer. He mustn't be allowed to get away with it.

Doctor Roberts came into the house. He spoke briefly with the living and turned toward the dead. He stood motionless for a moment. His grief spread like a black aura

all about him. It spread until it had covered the whole room. He had delivered Janet, prescribed for her sniffles, set the arm she'd broken trying to jump a skittish horse during a summer vacation from college. He had sat by her all night the night he'd broken the news to her that her parents had been killed in a plane crash, that now she would have to live in the great house with Murgy and a housekeeper to look after her wants.

She flew to Doctor Roberts, remembering the way the big, square face and white goatee had always symbolized strength and intelligence to her.

You must understand, Doctor. It was Murgy. He was ever so lucky; everything worked devilishly for him, my arrival alone, the broken shoe heel.

Then she fell back, appalled. It were as if she had bruisingly struck a solid black wall, the walls of a crypt where Doctor Roberts had shut away a part of himself. *She would never reach him, because he didn't believe. When a man died, he died as a dog or a monkey died. That's what Doctor Roberts maintained.*

Janet moved to a table holding an assortment of potted plants. She studied the activities before her.

She saw Doctor Roberts complete his examination. He talked with Blake. He looked at the broken shoe heel and nodded.

He put a professional eye on Cricket. He reopened his bag, took out a needle, and gave her a shot. Then he spoke with Tom, and Tom took Cricket out.

The doctor was explaining something to Blake. At last, Blake nodded his consent.

Janet felt herself perk up.

Of course, they'll phone the police. It's a routine, have-to measure when something like this happens.

She felt the dark, slimy thing in Murgy gather and strengthen itself, felt its evil smugness and confidence.

This was her last chance, Janet knew. The balance simply had to be restored. Otherwise, she was liable to be earth-bound until Murgy, finally, died and a higher justice thus restored the cosmic balance.

But what if they send someone like Doctor Roberts?

The policeman came at last.

He was a big man, had sandy hair and gray eyes and a jaw that looked as if it had been hacked from seasoned oak. His nose had been broken sometime in the past and reposed flagrantly misshapen on his face.

Janet hovered over him.

Look at Murgy!

For Pete's sake, one second there, when you walked in, it was naked in Murgy's eyes!

Intent on his job, the policeman walked to the stilled form at the foot of the stairway. He looked at the left shoe, then up the stairs.

After a moment, he walked up the stairs, examined the carpet, the railing. He measured the length of the stairs with his eyes.

Then he came slowly down the stairs.

He paused and looked at the beautiful girlish body.

His compassion came flooding out into the room. Janet felt as if she could ride the edges of it like a buoy.

It was a quiet, unguarded moment for him. Janet threw her will into the effort.

It was Murgy. Look at Murgy, the murderer!

He glanced at Murgy. But then, he glanced at the others too.

He began talking with Doctor Roberts.

Janet stayed close to the policeman.

If she could have met him in life, she knew they would have enjoyed a silent understanding.

I met a lot of people like that. Everybody meets people whom they like or distrust just by a meeting of the eyes.

You're feeling them out, forming opinions right now, by looking into their eyes, talking with them, letting the edges of your senses reach out and explore the edges of theirs.

I feel your respect for the doctor.

I feel you recoil now as you talk with Murgy. The dark, slimy thing is deep down, well hidden, but somehow you sense it.

But for Pete's sake, feeling it isn't enough. You must pass beyond feeling to realization.

Murgy killed me.

The balance simply has to be restored.

The policeman broke off his talk with Murgy. More official people had arrived. They took photographs. Two of them in white finally carried the body away on a stretcher.

Except for the policeman, the official people went away.

Blake went out. The doctor departed. Murgy was standing with tears in his eyes. The policeman touched Murgy's shoulder, spoke.

Janet was in the doorway, barring it. But Murgy didn't know she was there. He went across the lawn, to his apartment over the garage.

Only the policeman was left. He stood with his hat in his hands, looking at a spot at the base of the stairs with eyes heavy with sadness.

He was really younger than the rough face and broken nose made him appear.

Young and sad because he had seen beauty dead. Young and sad, and sensitive.

Janet pressed close to him. *It's all right, for me. You understand? There's no pain. It's beautiful here —except for the imbalance of Murgy's act.*

It wasn't an accident. You mustn't believe that. Murgy did it

You didn't like him. You sensed something about him.

Think of him! Think only of Murgy!

Don't leave yet. Ask yourself, are you giving up too easily. Shouldn't you look further?

He passed his hand through his hair. He seemed to be asking himself a question. He measured the stairway with his eyes.

She could sense the quiet, firm discipline that was in him, the result of training, of years of experience. The result of never ceasing to question, never stopping the mental probe for the unlikely, the one detail out of place.

Yes, yes! You feel something isn't quite right.

The shoe—if a girl came home to change it, would she go all the way upstairs and then start down again without changing it?

Oh, the question is clear and nettlesome in your mind.

It's a fine question.

Don't let it go. Follow it. Think about it.

He stood scratching his jaw. He walked all the way upstairs. Down the hallway. He looked in a couple of rooms, found hers.

In her room, he opened the closet. He looked at the shoes.

He stood troubled. Then he went back to the head of the stairs. Again he measured them with his eyes.

But finally, he shook his head and walked out of the house.

Come back! You must come back!

She couldn't reach him. She knew he wasn't coming back. So she perched on the roof of his speeding car as it turned a corner a block away.

He went downtown. He stopped the car in the parking lot at headquarters. He went into the building and entered his office.

Another man was there, an older man. The two talked together for a moment. The older man went out.

The policeman sat down at his desk. He picked up a pen and drew a printed form toward him.

Janet hovered over the desk.

You mustn't make out the form. You must not write it off as an accident.

Murgy did it.

He started writing.

It was murder.

He wrote a few lines and stopped.

Go get Murgy. He was the only one on the estate when it happened. Can't you see it had to be Murgy?

He nibbled at the end of the pen.

Think of the shoe. I went up, but I didn't change shoes.

He ran his finger down his crooked nose. He started writing again.

Okay, bub, if that's the way you want it, go ahead and finish the report. Call it an accident. But I'm

not giving up. I'm sticking with you. I'll throw Murgy's name at you so many times you'll think you're suffering combat fatigue from being a cop too long.

Ready? Here we go, endlessly, my friend, endlessly. Murgy, Murgy, Murgy Murgymurgymurgy ...

He drove home. He showered. He got in bed. He turned the light off.

After a time, he rolled over and punched the pillow. After another interval, he threw back the covers with an angry gesture, turned on the light, sat on the edge of the bed, and smoked a cigarette.

There was a telephone beside the bed and on the phone stand a pad of paper.

While he smoked, he doodled. He drew a spiked heel. He drew the outlines of a house. He wasn't a very good artist. He looked at the drawing of the house and under it he wrote: "No sign of forced entry. Only that servant around..."

He drew a pair of owlish eyes, and ringed them in black. He added some sharp lines for a face.

Then he ripped off the sheet of paper, wadded it and threw it toward the waste basket. He snubbed out his cigarette, turned off the light for a second time, punched his pillow with a gesture betokening finality, and threw his head against it.

He reached the curtain of sleep. He started through it. Cells relaxing, the barriers began to waver, weaken.

She pressed in close.

MurgymurgymurgyMURGY!

He tossed and pulled the covers snug about his shoulders. Then he threw them off, got out of bed, and snapped on the light.

He was still agitated as he dressed and went out.

He sat in the dark car for many long minutes, before starting it. He drove aimlessly for a couple of blocks, his mind a pair of millstones grating against themselves. He stopped before a bar and went in.

He sat down at the end of the bar, alone. He had one, two, three drinks. His face was still troubled by nagging questions.

Two more drinks. They didn't help. The creases deepened in his cheeks.

Janet balanced atop a cognac bottle. *Better give Murgy a little more thought. Why not follow him, shadow him? He isn't resting easy. He'll want to get rid of those jewels in a shady deal now and be ready to run if the fakes are spotted.*

The policeman raised his gaze and looked at the television set over the bar. He stopped thinking about the long stairway, the broken heel, Murgy, and various possibilities. His mind snapped to what he was seeing on the TV set.

A local newscaster with doleful face was talking about her, her

death. He was only a two dimensional image and she could sense nothing about him from this point. He was taking considerable time, and she could only guess that he was talking about her background, her family. There were some old newspaper pictures, one taken when she'd been helping raise money for the crippled children's hospital. She hadn't wanted any publicity for that, and she wished the newscast were less thorough.

There was a sudden disturbance down the bar. A fat man with a bald head and drink-flushed face was giving the TV set the Bronx cheer.

Janet felt quick displeasure. *Really, I was never the rich, degenerated hussy you're making me out, mister.*

The force of the mental explosion back down the bar caused Janet to rise to the ceiling. She saw that the fat man's exhibition had also disturbed her young policeman. He slammed out of the bar. And he was so mad he started across the street without looking.

Janet became a silent scream.

He looked up just in time to see the taxi hurtle around the corner. He tried to get out of the way. He'd had a drink too many.

Instantaneously, he became an empty shell of flesh and blood, shortly destined to become dust, lying broken in the middle of the street. A terrified but innocent cabbie was emerging from his taxi, and a small crowd was pouring out of the bar to join him.

This was defeat, Janet knew. Never had a defeat of the flesh been so agonizing. The stars could have been hers. Now the stars would have to wait, for a long, long time. For as long as Murgy lived. It wasn't the waiting that would be so hard. It was this entrapment in incompleteness, this torture, this unspeakable pain of being inescapably enmeshed in cosmic injustice.

She took her misery to the darkest shadow she could find and lurked there awhile, until the scene in the street had run its course, from arrival to departure of the police.

A bitter thought wave her propulsion, she returned to the estate. She filtered through the roof and hovered in the foyer.

While there had been hope, the foyer's full capacity for torture had not reached her. Now she felt it.

"Hello, Beautiful."

Where had the thought come from? She swirled like a miniature nebula.

"Take it easy I'm right here."

He swirled beside her. *Her policeman.*

"You!"

"Sure. I was so amazed at where I found myself I didn't get to you while you were hiding near the accident. You know, you *feel* even more beautiful than you looked."

"Why, thanks for the compli-

ment. And your own homeliness, fellow, was all of the flesh. But don't you concern yourself with me."

"Why not?"

"I'm stuck here. You didn't catch Murgy."

"I had a hunch about that guy..."

"Hunch? Hah! It was me trying to get the guilt of the old boy across to you."

"Really? Well, I was going to keep an eye on him."

"I was after you to do that, too. See, I caught him stealing my jewels."

"I had to go and ruin everything!"

"But you didn't mean to barge in front of that cab."

"Just the same, I'll spend eternity being sorry. Sure you can't come with me?"

"Nope. Just go quickly."

He was gone. She felt his unwilling departure. It was the final straw of torture.

"Look, honey, my name's Joe."

He was back.

"I got this idea. It's worth a try at least."

It was so good having him back.

"My superior officer, Lieutenant Hal Dineen. He's the sharpest, most tenacious cop ever to carry a badge. That report of mine, to start with, is going to raise a question in his mind. The same facts you were trying to get over to me are there for him to find. I just bounced over to headquarters and back. Just a look told me my fray with that taxi has knocked his mental guards to smithereens. He was at his desk, reading that last report of mine. If you alone could do what you did, consider what the two of us trying real hard can do if we hit Dineen, in his present state, with full thought force."

Janet bounced to the rooftop. Joe was beside her.

"Janet, Dineen is razor sharp at playing hunches. He believes in them. All set to hit him with the grandfather of all hunches, the results of which he'll talk about for a lifetime?"

"Let's." *Let's, darling.*

Lieutenant Hal Dineen was talking to a fellow officer, "I dunno. Just one of those things. Comes from being a cop, I guess, from having the old subconscious recognize and classify information the eyes, ears, and hands miss. Just a hunch I had about this old family retainer. We all get 'em—these hunches. Me, especially, I'm a great one for 'em. And this one I couldn't shake and so I figured...."

SETH POWERS had spent a whole week hating the man who had killed his brother. But now, as he sat in the rear of Haughton County's town hall, all his hatred merged and focused on the small, rotund man who sat enthroned behind the scarred wooden table, his pudgy fingers interlocked, his tiny mouth pursed in an expression of judicious wisdom. He had good reason to hate Willard Klay, county coroner, because Klay had poured cold water on Seth's burning desire for vengeance, a desire that had brought him back to Haughton County for the first time in eight years.

"Doesn't seem to be any doubt of it," Klay was saying. "Bill Powers shot himself by accident, cleaning that shotgun of his. From the powder burns, position of the body, etcetera, no doubt about it. Well, you heard all the facts. Want to vote now, or break for lunch?"

Somebody on the panel muttered something, and Klay said: "All right, let's have the vote then. Dan, you want to take the ballot?"

It was no more than five minutes later, that the foreman was able to say: "We find the deceased was killed accidently," Klay nodded and said, "So be it," and then stood up and yawned like a man rousing from a long midsummer's nap. There was a lot of shuffling feet and random talking, and only Seth Powers, eyes dark with anger and mouth slitted with hate, remained in his seat, unwilling to believe that it was all over, just like that, and that his brother's murderer had good cause to eat hearty and sleep well that night.

When the room was cleared, Seth was still sitting there, but Joe Garafolo, the deputy sheriff of Haughton County, came and sat quietly by his side. He leaned forward and said:

"I know how you feel, Seth, but there's nothing you can do about it now. Best thing to do is go on back home."

CORONER'S JURY

by O. H. Leslie

"Go home? Is that all you can say? You were the one who found Billy's body, Joe, why didn't you say something?"

Garafolo parted his hands. "What do you want from me, Seth? I couldn't do more than I did. There wasn't any incriminating evidence, just your brother and the gun. No footsteps, no sign of a struggle, nothing. I *had* to turn it over to Klay."

"But you know Klay. He's not fit for his job."

"How many coroners are? But the good citizens of Haughton County voted him in, Seth; I didn't pick him."

"But you *know* Billy wouldn't have shot himself by accident; he's handled shotguns since he was nine; he couldn't do anything so stupid. Why didn't they call in the Magruder brothers? You know they hated Billy. You know the way they were always fighting—"

Garafolo shrugged. "This wasn't a trial; it was an inquest. Nobody was accusing anybody of murder. How do you know it was the Magruders? Why couldn't it have been Jake Damon, from Pine Bluff? Or half a dozen other guys who didn't like Billy? You've been in the city a long time, Seth. You don't know this place any more."

Seth Powers stood up, unable to bear the empty room any longer. He went to the doorway with Garafolo after him, the deputy's face lined and worried.

"You won't do anything foolish, Seth? You won't go around accusing people of murder?"

"I wouldn't know where to start," Seth said wearily. "That's the job the police ought to be doing. Only the police have got to do what Klay tells them to do—"

"It's not like that, Seth. Klay just does his job."

"His job? Do you think he knows his job? You think he's qualified to tell the difference between accident or suicide or homicide? Do you, Joe?"

"No," the deputy said bluntly. "But that's the system, Seth. You can't blame Klay himself. If we threw him out of office next November, they'd probably put another guy just like him on the

Since indictments are in vogue, this is one. It brands corruption and nepotism and thievery-in-high places, for what they are: socially accepted aspects of our day.

ticket. No better and no worse, no more qualified than Klay is—"

"It's not fair!"

Joe Garafolo snorted. "Who said it was fair? I just said it's so."

He would have thought there'd be company at Willard Klay's house that night, that there would be a congratulatory celebration in his honor. But Klay was alone in the gloomy clapboard house at the end of the dirt road—a house that Seth remembered as a town showpiece, but which was now rotting and decaying after the death of Klay's childless wife.

When he knocked, Klay opened the door and blinked at him, then twisted his small mouth in a disapproving frown. But he let him in.

"I guess you know why I came, Mr. Klay. It's about Billy."

"Yes, I figured that," the little man said. "But it's no good arguing with me about it, Mr. Powers, the thing's over and done with."

"Not for me it isn't, Mr. Klay. I wanted to come and tell you that. I think you made a wrong decision this morning, and I won't let it stop there."

Klay drew himself up, without making half an inch's difference. "Now you listen to me, Mr. Powers. I was elected coroner of this county twice running. We had a legal inquest, *super visum corporis,* and nothing can change that. Your brother's death was an accident; the jury said so."

"But the jury didn't see my brother. Only you did."

"I'm the only one *has* to see the body; that's the law. And I say he got careless with that gun and shot himself."

"Billy wasn't careless!" Seth heard himself shout, but couldn't control his voice. "He's handled guns ever since he was a kid. He never had an accident, and never would. It was murder, Klay. My brother was killed!"

Surprisingly, the coroner didn't shout in reply. He grew calmer, and smiled. He drew a toothpick from his trouser pocket and began to excavate his back teeth.

"You know what the trouble with you is, Mr. Powers? You always thought Haughton County wasn't good enough for you. That's why you picked up and went to the city; the only thing brought you back was your brother's death. Now you think we're all a bunch of hicks out here, don't you? Nothing we do is good enough for you, isn't that right?"

"That's not it. It's *you* that's not good enough. You don't deserve your job—"

"What's the matter, Mr. Powers? Don't they believe in elections where you come from?"

"You're a carpenter!" Seth bellowed. "You married Jeff Oglethorpe's sister, and he was mayor, so he put you on the ticket. You

don't know what the job's all about. You're a carpenter, Klay!"

"That's enough now," the coroner said sharply, putting his hand on Seth's chest. "Nobody invited you here; so you invite yourself out again. I won't talk to you in this frame of mind."

"You'll have to talk to me, Klay. I'm not forgetting this—"

The coroner shoved with the flat of his palm. Angrily, Seth batted the arm away, and Klay's eyes changed color. "Get out of here!" he cried, and began to push Seth towards the door. But the younger man, rooted by his purpose, wouldn't be moved. There was a scuffle, and then a struggle; Klay shouted again, and Seth suddenly found the man's wrists in his tightly gripped hands and he was shoving the coroner backwards towards the mantelpiece. There was a thud of bone, and a relaxation in the coroner's livid features; then Klay slipped to the floor with a childlike moan. Seth bent over him, still too angry to be sympathetic, and shouted at him to get up. When Klay was still, Seth yelled at him once more, and then knew that no volume of voice could pierce the curtain which had dropped between him and the man on the floor. He backed towards the door, until his hand touched the handle. Then he flung the door open, and fled into the night.

It was a week later, and the task of settling his brother's affairs was still only partly accomplished. But Seth Powers took an afternoon off to attend the inquest.

Ray Oglethorpe, the newly-appointed coroner of Haughton County, surveyed his first audience and then cleared his throat.

"After examination of the evidence," he said, tapping his fingertips together, "there don't seem to be any doubt that Willard Klay suffered one of his dizzy spells and fell, his head striking the mantel and causing a brain concussion. In the opinion of the county, the death was accidental."

And when the other details of the inquest were over, Seth Powers rose and left meekly with the rest of the crowd.

O'HANLON and I were in the guard's dining room having a cup of coffee with Lieutenant Farley before going on duty.

"It's impossible," Farley said.

I lit a cigar. "You mean it hasn't been done."

He shook his head. "I mean it's impossible. Nobody ever got off this rock unless we let him."

"What about Hilliard?"

Farley snorted. "Maybe he got off, but what good did it do him? His little wooden flippers didn't do much to improve his swimming. The current and the cold finished him and he drowned."

I grinned slightly. "For two weeks, until we found his body, we thought he made it."

"Not me," Farley snapped. "I would have bet plenty against it."

O'Hanlon looked pained, the the way he always does when I argue with the Lieutenant.

I watched a fleck of cigar ash drop to the floor. "It's only a mile and a half across the bay to the city. Or about two and a half to the point. A good swimmer shouldn't have trouble."

"There's the fog and the cold, Regan," Farley said. "Don't forget about them. And the current is tricky and strong."

"That's what the newspapers say."

Farley pounded the table. "That's what I say too. I been here since the place opened and I know what I'm talking about."

I rolled the cigar in my mouth. "I read about Henderson and Wallace in thirty-seven. Their bodies were never found. Some people like to think that they crawled out of the bay on the other side and went on to a happy life in South America."

Farley's voice rose. "Their

THE $5,000 GETAWAY

by Jack Ritchie

Bars do not a prison make—not in themselves they don't. Walls, floors and ceilings are also sine qua non. *Now, the deluxe model features a cold body of water surrounding the entire edifice. And it is also equipped with convicts who are all quite eager to escape.*

bodies were carried out to sea.

I rubbed my jaw. "We'll never know."

Farley glared at me. "We never heard a thing about them."

I shrugged. "You'd hardly expect them to send the warden a Christmas card every year."

O'Hanlon glanced at his watch. "It's nearly four, Regan. Time for us to go."

He sighed as we left the room. "You're just a rookie guard, Regan. He's the Lieutenant. It isn't smart to make him sore."

I knocked the light off my cigar when we reached the cell house. The gate keeper waited while the armory officer checked us through his vision panel.

O'Hanlon's eyes took in the tool steel bars. "Farley's right. Nobody gets off this place and lives."

The armory officer pressed his buzzer and the shield pulled off the lock.

"People sure go through a lot of trouble to get out of some places," O'Hanlon said. "Like a break I read about in Kansas City. This

guy was in a cell on the sixth floor of the police station waiting to go to trial. He'd been there a couple of months and then one night he sawed through the window bars and climbed down the side of the building."

Inside the first gate we waited until the keeper opened the door.

"It seemed like something impossible," O'Hanlon said. "But when the police got him back later, he told them how he'd done it. For six weeks he practiced in his cell for hours every day strengthening his fingers with exercises. Finally, he could actually support the full weight of his body for over a half an hour with just his fingertips. He went down the side of that building just that way, with his fingertips and using every crack and joint for a hold."

We relieved Gomez and Morgan in Cell Block C.

The late afternoon sun made the place bright and two orderlies were polishing Broadway between the three-tiered cells. One of them was Turpin.

The rest of the men were at the shops and the cell doors were all open. I walked along the shelves, glancing inside each cell. Some were plain and bare, with no more than the bed, the toilet bowl, the sink and fountain, and others looked like miniature law offices, art studios, or chapels, depending on the nature of the men who occupied them.

I stopped at Turpin's cell on the second tier and went inside. It was one of the plain ones, not a thing that wasn't issued, except for Volume 18 of the library's encyclopedia. I riffled through the pages, and the book still opened to the same place, the same subject. The pages were a little grimy. Turpin really should have memorized that section by now. The article was short and clear.

When I came out of his cell, Turpin was looking up. He went back to polishing the floor.

During the break for the orderlies, I went down to talk to him. "Not smoking, Turpin?"

"No, sir. I gave it up."

"Now I wish I could do that," I said. "Tobacco's bad for the wind."

There was the faintest flicker in his eyes. "Yes, sir."

I looked through the incurved bars at the window to where buoys marked the forbidden zone two hundred yards off shore. "This is a lot better than Dog Block, isn't it, Turpin?"

His tone was expressionless. "Yes, sir."

"At least you get more sun and air," I said. "The walls are a little farther apart and you get a chance for exercise." I studied him. "Just be a good boy and you might get even more sun and air. Maybe a job with the garbage crew or the wharf gang."

"I think I'd like that, sir."

I looked out at the bay again. "Look at all that water, Turpin. I'll bet you never saw anything like that in Arizona. That's where you were born and raised, isn't it?"

His eyes were on the bay. "Yes, sir."

"Nice place," I said. "But dry." I looked back at him. "I'm a little worried about you, Turpin."

He was startled. "Why, sir?"

"Your hour in the recreation yard," I said. "I hear that all you do is trot around the place."

"Just working off steam, sir."

"Good," I said. "Real healthy. Keeps you in condition." I pursed my lips. "You ought to keep your mind occupied too, Turpin. Take correspondence courses and stuff like that."

"I'll think about it, sir."

"We got a guy here who made himself a world authority on canary birds," I said. "Just imagine that. From books. And some of the boys in here have been making out so many writs and petitions that they know more about law than most lawyers." I smiled slightly. "A man can do almost anything if he sets his mind to it."

I walked back down the hall and joined O'Hanlon.

He watched Turpin. "That man used to give us a lot of trouble, but it looks like he's tamed."

"He doesn't care much for the isolation cells or solitary," I said. "Not much opportunity there."

O'Hanlon grinned. "He didn't much want to come to this rock in the first place. He made a break for it before the launch even got here."

I looked back down the corridor at Turpin. "That right?"

"It was before you came here, Regan. About three years ago when Farley was bringing him here from the mainland, he tried to get away. Just as the boat pulled away, he slipped his cuffs and made a jump back for the dock."

O'Hanlon chuckled. "I guess he waited a second too long because he landed in the water instead of on the dock. Went down like a stone. If Farley hadn't fished him out, he would have drowned."

At five-thirty, the prisoners were marched from the dining hall into the cell block. After the count bell, we locked them up for the night.

At eight, Lieutenant Farley came around to see how things were. He looked down the lines of closed cell doors. "Quiet," he said. "Just like always."

I covered my smile. "Not like always. This place can get noisy. Like the time seven were killed."

He scowled. "But nobody got out of the cell blocks."

"That's right," I said. "This isn't the place to try anything."

"Maximum security," Farley said. "Minimum privilege. No radios or newspapers. Correspond-

ence and visiting restricted. No commissary. And the silence system."

"Not much to live for."

He grunted. "But only one ever took the easy way out. Everybody likes to live, no matter how hard things can get."

I looked up toward the skylights in the cell block. "I keep wondering what happened to Henderson and Wallace."

Farley scowled. "Stop wondering. The sharks chewed them up twenty years ago."

"We just don't know. Maybe they do their thinking in Spanish now."

Farley glared at me.

I smiled a little. "Did you know that a year before this became a Federal pen, two women swam out here from the city, bucking those awful currents, went all around the island, and back to the mainland. Did you ever hear about it?"

Farley's face was mottled. "Sure I heard about it. But I don't believe it. And if they did, I'll bet they were like those professionals. Like the ones who swim that channel over in Europe."

"It takes a lot of practice to do something like that."

He slapped the railing and grinned. "That's it, Regan. Hours and hours of practice. Years maybe. And where are these cons going to practice swimming? We ain't got a pool here, you know."

"That's right, Lieutenant," I said. "No pool."

Farley was still pleased. "Nobody here could make it across."

I nodded. "Especially if he couldn't swim in the first place."

He patted my shoulder. "Let me know if you see anybody in the water."

I made my round of the tiers at eight-thirty instead of nine-fifteen that night. On the second shelf I walked softly and stopped in front of Turpin's cell.

He was doing pushups.

They were easy for him now. He wasn't breathing hard at all.

I watched the number on his back, 1108-AZ, until I counted fifty push-ups and then I made a noise with my heel.

Turpin stopped and got to his feet slowly.

"Letting off steam?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. Letting off more steam."

"That's fine," I said. "Real intelligent."

On Tuesday, after the noon meal, O'Hanlon and I went down to the beach for our monthly target practice. I scored a 197 with the .45 automatic.

O'Hanlon shook his head. "How come you're so good with that thing?"

"I put in an hour a day at it."

He thought that over. "You don't get a bit more practice than the rest of us. Once a month we

all come down here and fire twenty rounds."

"But I still put in an hour a day."

He regarded me skeptically. "The government don't give you that many free bullets."

I lifted my empty automatic in line with the target, expelled my breath, and squeezed the trigger. "That's the way I practice, Pete. I don't need bullets."

O'Hanlon was dubious. "It can't be as good as the real thing."

"Some people think it's better," I said. "And it works."

We walked over to the truck and waited for the others to finish on the range.

"Maybe you got something," O'Hanlon said after awhile. "I once saw a movie short where some diving coach was training a couple of girls for the Olympics. Instead of using a pool, he had them jump off a springboard, do their twists, and land feet first in a pit of sand. They didn't need water at all."

Three weeks later, the deputy warden assigned Turpin to the wharf gang. That meant that every morning, Turpin and a half a dozen other prisoners unloaded the supply boat at the dock.

That evening when I made my nine-fifteen tour everything was the way it was supposed to be; the single fifty watt bulb burning in every cell and the prisoners in their bunks. Including Turpin.

A half an hour later I went up to the second tier again, this time on tip-toe.

Turpin was on the floor, face down. He was kicking his legs rhythmically, toes pointed.

When he knew I was there, he stopped and got to his feet.

I smiled. "Sick?"

He licked his lips. "No, sir."

"I thought you might be having convulsions."

"No, sir."

I kept smiling. "Maybe I ought to get the medical orderly?"

"No, sir. I feel all right."

"Then why aren't you in your bunk?"

He looked worried. "You're not going to put me on report?"

"I don't know," I said. "Not if you're sick. I don't like to be hard on anybody."

He nodded quickly. "Sort of sick, sir. Stiff muscles. I was just loosening them up so that I could get some sleep."

I nodded. "How do you like your new job?"

"Just fine, sir."

"I notice you got a little sunburn. A few more nice days like this and you ought to be able to get yourself a tan."

"Yes, sir."

"We get a lot of nice weather here," I said. "Bright, sunny, and clear. Most people seem to think we have nothing but fog."

Turpin said nothing.

"But when we get fog," I said, "we really get it. Can't see your hand in front of your face."

A week later at two in the afternoon, I was in my quarters when the siren began its two minute wail. I went to the window and cursed softly. He can't be that much of a fool, I thought fiercely. This isn't the time. There isn't enough fog and what there is will clear up soon.

Along with the other guards not on duty, I reported to the armory where I was issued a rifle. Lieutenant Farley got the launch keys from the board and we began making our way to our emergency stations down at the dock.

"It's Will Stacey," Farley said.

I could feel the tension leaving me. "How did he do it?"

"Sawed his way through one of the bars in the laundry and managed to squeeze through," Farley said. "The laundry officer figures he hasn't got more than a fifteen minute start, but that was enough for him to scale the wall and get through the cyclone fence and barbed wire on top. The tower man didn't see him because a patch of fog moved in. As far as we know, Stacey was the only one who made the break, but we'll be certain after we take a count."

On the way down to the dock, we passed the men being marched from the shop building back to the cell blocks. The wharf gang's truck came through the sally-gate. Turpin was on one of the side seats in the bed and he was watching the fog thoughtfully.

I grinned and almost waved to him.

At the dock, I cast off the lines and Farley eased the boat into the bay. The fog was wispy and drifting. Clear spots were beginning to appear.

"If he decided to swim," Farley said, "he can't be out too far."

We cruised out almost to the mainland and then turned and made our way slowly back to the island, sweeping far to the right and left as we went.

Farley grinned. "You look thoughtful, Regan."

"I was a little surprised," I said. "I didn't think anybody would try it at this time of the year."

"I'm never surprised," Farley said. "I know they can't make it, but I'm never surprised when they try. Most of them got nothing to lose but their lives."

We turned up our coat collars against the chill breeze and kept our eyes on the water.

Inside of half an hour we found Stacey floundering in the water and Farley turned the wheel toward him.

I stood up with the rifle, but O'Hanlon chuckled. "There's no fight in him, Regan. Put that thing down and save the man."

Stacey was taking desperate gulps of air when we got to him and his eyes were wide. He was just about dead exhausted.

I pulled him aboard and slipped the cuffs over his wrist.

Stacey's lips were blue and he shivered uncontrollably.

Farley felt generous. "Give the fool a blanket and a cigarette."

After he radioed the island, Farley watched Stacey take deep puffs of the smoke. "You were a damn fool, boy."

Stacey kept his eyes on the floorboards. "I didn't count on the fog lifting."

Farley laughed. "You were glad to see us. You didn't get one quarter of the way across and you were about to come to pieces."

Stacey was silent for a few seconds, then a tired grimace came to his lips. "Drowning is a terrible way to die," he said softly.

Farley winked at me. "The trouble with Stacey is that he's out of condition. He needs more practice in our swimming pool. A couple of hours a day. I'll see if I can arrange it."

A detail of guards met us at the dock and took Stacey back up the hill for a medical examination and dry clothes. After questioning, he would be put in one of the solitary cells in Dog Block.

Farley and I went to the mess hall for some coffee.

He chuckled. "Disappointed, Regan?"

I shrugged. "Why should I be disappointed?"

He grinned. "I just thought you might be."

I sipped my coffee. "If the fog hadn't lifted, a good swimmer would have made it."

Irritation came to his face. "I'd bet a thousand it can't be done."

"All right," I said quietly.

He glared at me. "All right, what?"

"I was just thinking," I said, "that if anybody gave me odds, say five to one, I'd be willing to put up a thousand that somebody will make it across within the next year."

Farley frowned. "You know what you're saying?"

I put a little more sugar in my coffee. "It would have to be kept quiet, a bet like that."

Farley watched me for a half a minute. Then his eyes went over the room. A couple of off-duty guards were drawing coffee from the urn at the far end of the hall. Otherwise the place was empty.

"I got the thousand," I said softly.

Farley watched the flame of his match as he lit a cigar. "Suppose somebody was stupid enough to make a crazy bet like that with you. How would anybody know whether a man made the swim or not? If he didn't make it, his body might be washed out to sea and never recovered. Like with Henderson and Wallace."

"I'd lose the bet," I said. "We'd have to know for certain that he made it."

Farley glanced at the guards again. "But suppose he did make it and then skipped off to South America. How would we know? He isn't likely to phone us."

"That's why I get the five to one odds," I said. "We'd have to know for sure. I'd be counting on the fact that he'd be seen on the mainland by responsible witnesses or that he'd be picked up by the police within a year." I put down the coffee cup. "But we'd be betting only on the fact that he did or didn't make a successful break from the rock. What happens after that doesn't matter."

Farley was thoughtful. "You're betting in the teeth of a lot of things."

"That's why I want the odds."

His eyes met mine. "Like you said, the whole thing would have to be kept quiet. The government wouldn't like to hear about it."

"There's one other thing I'd have to worry about," I said. "If I win, would I get paid?"

Farley's face got glowering red. "I never welshed on a bet in my life. Just be sure you got a thousand."

That evening I stopped in front of Turpin's cell.

He was sitting on the bunk, idly paging through a magazine.

"That's it," I said. "Improve your mind."

He looked up.

"Stacey should have done that," I said. "Spent his time improving his mind instead of trying to escape." I shook my head sadly. "He was plain stupid. Even if he had been able to go the distance, he should have made it his business to know about the fog."

Turpin waited.

"He should have figured it would clear up and we'd be waiting for him when it did. The fog's a tricky thing here. When it rolls in from the southwest you can bet it won't stay around long. It's different when it comes from the north."

Several days later Turpin came back from the wharf wringing wet.

The guard bringing the detail back to the cell block grinned. "Turpin got too close to the edge of the dock and fell off."

I looked at one of the windows. The day was bright and clear. "How was the water, Turpin?"

There was no expression on his face, but there was a gleam of what might have been triumph in his eyes. "It was a little cold, sir."

I talked to the guard. "Going to put that on report?"

He looked surprised. "What for? It was just a little accident."

"Just wondering," I said. "Did

you have any trouble fishing him out?"

He shook his head. "No. It was only a few feet from the dock. Turpin swam back himself, grinning like a monkey."

In September, Turpin was transferred to the garbage crew. It was still outside work. Every afternoon he was down at the incinerators at the beach.

And the fog weather began.

I was in my room in the guard's quarters when I saw the first heavy concentration coming from the northwest—from the sea. This would be the time he would try it. I could almost feel that.

The siren cut through the fog at two-thirty. I put my cigar in the ashtray and made my way to the armory.

Lieutenant Farley was assigning the search details. "This time it's Turpin. The fog came down on the garbage gang so fast that the guard was caught by surprise. He started hearding the prisoners to the truck, but Turpin slipped away and disappeared into the fog."

Farley grinned at me. "Relax. You're not winning any bet today. I happen to know for a fact that Turpin can't swim a stroke."

I shrugged. "Then why would he run away?"

Farley chuckled. "He lost his head when he saw a chance. He wasn't thinking. Now the best he can do is to hide out in some cave or corner of this island for a couple of days and hope that we'll think he's gone out and drowned himself. He probably figures that when we stop looking for him, he can smuggle himself aboard the supply boat."

I pocketed two clips of ammunition. "Then it won't be much good to take out the launch?"

Farley showed his teeth again. "No good at all. But we take it out just the same. That's our job."

A half a dozen more guards reported and Farley began giving them instructions.

I picked the launch keys off the board. "I'll wait for you down at the dock."

Outside, it was like walking through smoke. Every object was shrouded and strange, and the trip down to the dock took me almost fifteen minutes.

I checked the boat compass and headed the launch northeast, out into the bay. The fog misted my face and nothing was visible more than a few feet beyond the bow.

I could imagine what Farley would say when I got back.

"Why the hell didn't you wait for me?"

"I'm sorry, Lieutenant. But I thought I heard something out in the water."

Farley would probably grin. "You got some imagination. Why didn't you come back when you found he wasn't out there?"

I would look embarrassed. "I couldn't find the dock, Lieutenant. The fog was too thick."

"And what about the radio?" Farley would demand. "Why didn't you get in touch with us?"

"But the radio doesn't work, Lieutenant."

Now I kept the launch going until I was about half way across the bay and a few miles north. Then I cut the motor and let the boat drift.

I wouldn't have been able to do that if Farley were with me. We'd be cruising back and forth and there would be a chance that we might find Turpin.

I didn't want that.

I disconnected a lead-in wire on the radio and sat down to wait. The current would bring me back near the island in a few hours.

The sea was calm, with just enough swelling to let you know that it was still alive. I tried to figure how long it would take a man to swim a mile and a half. It was difficult to know how good all of Turpin's practice had made him.

The time passed slowly. It was silent except for the breathing of the ocean and the faint fog horn of the coast guard boat searching near the mainland.

The cold and damp began to get into my bones after an hour. I checked my watch and decided to wait at least another half an hour before I started the motor and went back to the island.

And then I heard the sound, muffled in the distance.

I held my breath as it came again.

It was the hoarse cry of a man calling for help.

I cursed softly. Turpin had got himself lost in the fog. Instead of going straight, he had veered to the left. He was swimming parallel to the coast.

His calls were closer now, desperate in the emptiness.

I shook my head savagely. If he drowned here, the current would carry his body back to the island. It would be found in a few days, a week or two.

I started the motor and kept the launch as slow as possible while I searched. It was hard work, but I kept at it, shutting off the power now and then to listen.

When I found Turpin he was treading water and taking deep gasps for air.

His eyes met mine and I saw the same thing that I'd seen in Stacey's when we picked him up. There was defeat because his try had failed and relief because he would soon be out of the water.

I pulled him aboard and put him in the stern.

His face was dead white and he shivered with cold. I tossed him a blanket and watched him huddle inside it.

Turpin's teeth chattered. "How close did I get?"

"Not close at all," I said. "You

were headed straight for Seattle."

Turpin sighed. "I was in the water a long, long time."

"An hour and a half," I said.

"I could have made it," he said softly. "If only I'd kept going straight. You knew what I was going to do didn't you?"

I grinned, but said nothing.

"You were waiting for me to make the break. You wanted a little fun to fight the dullness of life. You knew what I was going to do, and where, and when. Maybe you even wanted to use that rifle."

I ignored what he'd said. I studied him for half a minute, thinking it out. Then I searched through my pockets until I found an old letter. I carefully tore off a blank section at the bottom of one page. It would have to do.

I handed it to Turpin and gave him my fountain pen. "I want you to write the warden a little note."

His mouth gaped slightly.

"Go ahead," I snapped. "Write what I tell you."

He hesitated and then shrugged.

"Dear Warden," I said. "It was a cold swim, but it was worth it."

Turpin looked up, trying to figure it out. Then he shook his head, moved the pen across the paper.

"Now wish him a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

Turpin's mouth dropped again.

I glared at him. "Write it and sign your name."

He did what he was told.

I took the paper from him and examined it. The handwriting made it good enough, but I wanted more. "Put your fingers in some of that grease on the floorboards and let's have ten little fingerprints under your signature."

When that was done, I folded the paper carefully and put it in my wallet. It was worth five thousand dollars to me.

"Stand up, Turpin," I said. "And turn around."

He got up wearily and turned.

I brought the rifle stock down hard on the back of his head and he dropped without a sound.

After I made sure that he was dead, I got the anchor from the bow locker and tied it to him.

I took the launch three miles west, out to sea, and dumped Turpin's body overboard.

Then I lit a cigar, checked with the compass, and headed back for my chat with Farley.

In a month or two, when I got to the city on one of my days off, I'd mail Turpin's note in a plain typed envelope.

The postmark ought to make news, and it would start all the world looking for the first man to escape from the rock.

A cemetery can be and frequently is quite funereal. However, according to the ads I have seen which sell this ultimate type of real estate, all is serene—but lively—the view is good and the inhabitants most convivial.

NOT SO DEEP AS A GRAVE

by Richard Hardwick

STANDING there at the side of old man Jessup's grave, listening to the preacher and mopping away at the sweat around his neck and on his forehead, the answer came to Charlie Quillian as full and complete as Minerva sprung from the brow of Jupiter. For a long time he had thought about killing Mason Howe, but with one thing and another he had never gotten around to it. The thing that stumped him was the problem of disposing of Mason's mortal remains. He had come up with the usual methods, such as stuffing him in the furnace, or burying him in the woods, or weighing him down with scrap iron and dropping him in an abandoned quarry or a deep lake. But the objections always cropped up. The police were always sifting ashes and finding things, or a hunter's dog would sniff around and dig a bone up, or something would go wrong and the body would float to the surface. So Charlie procrastinated until that day at old man Jessup's funeral.

It started, as Charlie's thoughts wandered during the preacher's eulogy of the dear departed. Charlie was looking at the grave, thinking how nice and cool it must be down there at the bottom. Then he began to think about the pile of dirt on the other side of the grave, covered over with the mat of imitation grass. He thought of how heavy that dirt must feel, six feet of it piled in on you. He wondered about that. Why six feet? Why not five? Or seven? After all, the old man was sealed up tight in a nice metal casket and there was a lot of wasted space above him when you put him six

feet down. There was actually room enough for four or five more bodies between the casket and the grass on top. Charlie thought about that for a few minutes, and when he was through thinking, he glanced out of the corner of his eye at Mason Howe, standing right next to him.

He had the perfect place for his partner now. The perfect place.

Actually, the solution to Charlie's problem came to him at the most propitious possible moment, for as it turned out, he *had* to get rid of Mason Howe. Charlie had been stealing more or less regularly from the business, and the afternoon after Jessup's funeral, Mason Howe found out about it and confronted Charlie with what he'd discovered.

"I don't know how long you been gettin' away with this, Charlie, or how much you stole, but I aim to find out and I aim to put you in jail where you belong!" Blood vessels were swelled on Mason Howe's neck and along the sides of his head, and his face was purple. "I tried and tried to figure how come we wasn't makin' any more money than we was! I went over everything I could think of and I still couldn't see it! I never thought my partner'd be dippin' in the till. But he *was!* And I got him to rights now and I'm gonna call the police!"

But, of course, Mason Howe didn't call the police—then, or ever. Because when he turned away to pick up the telephone, Charlie Quillian smacked him in the back of the head with a big quartz paperweight they kept on the desk, killing him instantly.

Charlie placed his late partner in a closet, closed the office, and went to a cafeteria and had an early supper. When darkness fell, he went back to the office and loaded Mason Howe into the trunk of his Ford, taking special pains to avoid getting bloodstains on himself or the car. He drove home and rummaged about the basement for a quarter of an hour, finally emerging with an old tarpaulin and a spade. Charlie put these items into the automobile trunk beside Mason Howe and went back in the house and watched television until midnight.

After midnight, Charlie reasoned, there would be little traffic, particularly in the vicinity of the cemetery. He drove out the Darien Road, taking care to keep within the speed laws and observing all stop signs. When he reached the cemetery, he turned off on the dirt road that ran the length of the burial ground, his lights off, and stopped when he reached a point near the plot where old man Jessup had been laid to rest. He got out, carried Mason Howe, the tarp, and the spade to the graveside, and prepared himself for the task at hand. He laid the tarp down evenly beside the grave,

spaded the sod off the top, and began to dig, placing the dirt on the tarp.

The work proved to be more strenuous than he had anticipated, particularly in view of the fact that it was fairly freshly turned. He dug down waist deep, went another six inches for good measure, after which he deposited the late Mason Howe neatly in the bottom of the trench and shovelled all the dirt back in. He shook the tarp off, methodically replaced the strips of turf, and got into his car and drove home.

Charlie Quillian and Mason Howe were very similar in build, and with the aid of Howe's glasses, and a fake mustache, Charlie looked, to the eye of a stranger, a great deal like Mason Howe. In this disguise, an hour later, Charlie boarded a bus to Jacksonville, and there purchased an airline ticket to Atlanta. In Atlanta, he surreptitiously dropped the glasses and mustache down a storm sewer, and took the next bus back to Jacksonville. By noon the following day, he was back in his office in Centerville.

Just as he entered the office, the phone started ringing. After a momentary hesitation, he picked up the receiver.

"Hello," he said.

"That you, Charlie? Where the devil have you and Howe been all morning? This is Joe at the garage. Howe left his car for a grease job yesterday and I wanted to know when he was gonna get it outta my way."

"Well, to tell you the truth," Charlie said, "I'm looking for Mason myself. And what I want to see him about is a dang sight more important than gettin' his car greased!"

Joe was silent for a moment. "Well," he said, "if I see him first I'll tell him you're lookin' for him."

Charlie sighed strongly into the mouthpiece. "I'm afraid he already knows that, but thanks just the same."

"Ain't nothing wrong, is there, Charlie?"

"I'm kinda busy right now, Joe, checkin' over the books. I'll talk to you some other time."

He hung up. That was as quick a way as any to get a rumor started in Centerviller. Tell it to Joe. Charlie Quillian looked at his watch. He'd wait half an hour, then call McKeague and tell him he needed somebody to check the company books.

"No doubt about it, Charlie," McKeague said, removing his glasses and wiping them with his handkerchief. "I told you a while back that you ought to have a regular outside audit made—"

"I hate to disagree with you,

Mac, but you didn't tell me. It must have been Mason you told. And right now it's plain as the nose on your face why he didn't say nothing to me about it."

Charlie sat down heavily at the desk and cradled his face in his hands. He felt the auditor's sympathetic touch on his shoulder.

"You ain't the first to make the mistake, Charlie, and you won't be the last. The best way on Earth to lose a friend is to let him put his hand in the till while you ain't watchin'. You want me to go over the whole thing and see just how much he got away with?"

Charlie nodded his head. "What do you reckon I ought to do now? I've been tyring to find Mason all morning and he ain't to be found."

McKeague frowned sagely. "Funniest thing how they see it comin' and duck out just in time! Funniest thing! If I was you, Charlie, I'd call the sheriff. That's what I'd do."

Charlie straightened up and gave McKeague a horrified look. "Get the police after him? But he was my friend!"

"*Was* is right! You've wasted enough time as it is. That crook could be thousands of miles away by now. Here! I'll put in the call!"

McKeague ground his teeth and snatched up the telephone.

The sheriff lowered his three hundred pounds into the chair and the casters gave a little squeak of pain. He exhaled slowly with a sound like a steam engine.

"Hot, ain't it," he said.

"Hot ain't the word," Charlie replied conversationally.

The amenities over, the sheriff got right to the business at hand. "Well, he's gone, Charlie. Skipped out real early this morning. He must have figured you was just about on to him." The sheriff groaned and stabbed at his brow with a dirty handkerchief. "I sent that picture of him you gave me around with some of the boys, and it looks like we mighta picked up his trail at the bus station. Leastwise, a fella at the ticket counter down there says he's pretty sure he sold him a ticket early this morning for the Jacksonville bus. We're checkin' Jacksonville now."

The sheriff hoisted himself laboriously from the chair. "We'll let you know if we hear anything, Charlie. By the way, has McKeague figured out yet how much he took you for?"

"He's workin' on it."

The sheriff went out, the door slamming behind him. Charlie watched as he got in his car and drove away, then he opened the desk drawer and brought out the bottle of whiskey. His scheme had worked out to perfection, and he owed it all to the timely death of Mr. Jessup. Charlie tilted the bottle up in a toast to Mr. Jessup.

Charlie had no doubt that the business would revert to him. He could then plow back into it the money he had stolen, and have the business on its feet again in no time. And everybody would say the sudden upswing was because the bad apple had been removed from the barrel.

Charlie thought that the late Mr. Jessup deserved one more little one.

It was four days later, when the sheriff came back into Charlie's place of business.

"Charlie, I got bad news for you. We follered his trail far as Atlanta. Got witnesses that say he bought an airline ticket there from Jacksonville, and more witnesses that saw him get off in Atlanta. Even found a cab driver that thinks he remembers takin' him into town. Up to there he didn't work very hard at hidin' his trail." The sheriff sighed and rubbed his stomach thoughtfully. "From then on, the trail's cold. No sign of him."

"You did your best, Sheriff. It ain't your fault. If it's anybody's fault, it's mine when you get right down to it."

"What do you mean?"

Charlie smiled wanly. "Well, I trusted him. I knew we wasn't makin' money the way we should, but I never thought to check up on the man who had been my friend and partner for such a long time."

"See what you mean," the sheriff said. "Can't tell about nobody these days. Now you take old man Jessup's widder, fer instance."

"Who?"

"Old Jessup's widder. Now who'd ever have thought a sweet little lady like that coulda done all they say?"

Charlie sat up a little straighter in his chair. "What—she do?"

"You ain't heard? It's all over town! The old man, the one that died here a week or so back, he was her seventh husband. The *seventh* one, mind you, and some of the kin folks of her fourth husband, I think it was, got kinda suspicious about the way number four died, and they had him dug up. Found out he was loaded to the gills with arsenic! Yes sir! To the *gills*!"

The sheriff stood up and took a paper from his pocket.

"Got the court order right here to go dig old man Jessup up. Don't reckon anybody'll be surprised at what we find. No sir, I don't reckon so!"

Charlie Quillian sighed and rubbed his hand over his eyes and shook his head. He reckoned he'd have to disagree with the sheriff about that.

MURDERS ARE SUCH A NUISANCE

by Robert Plate

LETTY ANDREWS was living this day as she felt life should be lived. She spent an hour soaking in a bubble bath, another hour anointing herself with creams and lotions, a third hour in pinking the nails of her toes and fingers, and a fourth hour in making up her face, which was quite pretty even before she started.

Time flew by on butterfly wings as she tried on six different dresses, for the cocktail dance to be given later that afternoon at the country club. She looked so lovely in each of them, that only after much soul searching was she able to finally settle on the green silk.

Along about four, as a break from her arduous activities, she stepped out on the second-floor terrace to look at the blue waters of the Sound. The only other dwelling on this exclusive point of land was the nearby home of the Fred Wade's.

As the balmy spring breeze fanned her face, Letty bubbled internally in anticipation of the dance. It would be frothy and gay, *tres gai,* and she would be *tres gai*-est of all. She always was. She cherished one thing her husband had said: "For Letty, life is just one non-stop Mardi Gras."

A woman's cry of anger, followed by a man's enraged answer, shattered her mood. Letty's brow furrowed with displeasure. It was that awful Helen Wade again. Helen used a smeary mascara that made her eyelids gruesomely sooty. Besides, for months now Helen had been dismissing her servants almost every afternoon—and always, shortly after they left, up drove that dark and worthless, though handsome young man, Phil Robinson.

Letty simply could not under-

In Letty Andrews we have a heroine who shall take her place beside such literary greats as Becky Sharp, Scarlet O'Hara, and the Five Little Peppers; eventually, I prophesy she shall sit beside lesser luminaries in one of the better penitentiaries.

stand how Helen would jeopardize her wonderful standard of living. So what if Phil Robinson was young and handsome. Letty's own husband, Wallace, was also rather elderly, and sometimes Letty found him as dull as an editorial page, but she would never dream of doing anything that might cut off all the glorious innocent fun.

"Helen," Letty murmured. "You're a fool."

As if to underline her judgement, a shrill scream issued from the Wade house, so piercing a scream that Letty's spine tingled as if her Swedish masseuse had suddenly had at her. She watched intently, dilating her wide blue eyes (outlined with a *proper* mascara) as Helen Wade staggered out of her house into the garden. Letty saw that Helen's dress was ages out of style and that she was beside the swimming pool when she fell.

It was also plain to Letty that Helen was not seeking a swim, for a steak knife projected from her back.

Immobilized, indignant, Letty watched the rest of the sordid scene. Phil Robinson ran from the house. He knelt beside Helen. He pleaded with her. There was no response. Helen lay still.

Then Phil stood up, looked about wildly. Letty was a floor higher than Phil, and less than a hundred feet distant. For a moment their eyes met. Uttering a hoarse cry of despair, Phil ran to his car. The little sports car thundered into life, raced down the Wade driveway, squealed and skidded onto the hardtop road, and then was gone.

Letty moved numbly toward her zebra-striped telephone. In a daze she leafed through the phone book, dialed the police station. The line was busy. She hung up.

The busy signal gave her time for second thoughts. And third thoughts. Her fourth thoughts had her worried. She might miss the fun at the country club. She uttered a pitiful wail. She just knew that once she reported to the police, she'd undoubtedly have to go to headquarters to repeat her few details endlessly to the coarse-featured men who worked there. Their rank cigar smoke would make her ill and get in her hair and clothes. And by the time they finished cross-examining her, the dance would be over.

She stamped her foot peevishly. How like that selfish Helen Wade to spoil other people's pleasure! If Helen had behaved herself, this tragedy—that is, the danger of missing the cocktail dance—never would have happened.

Letty pouted sulkily at the mirror. She stuck out her tongue at herself, then experimented with a variety of facial expressions. Forgetting her problem for a moment, she looked longingly at the green dress; it was easy to see herself

floating in it over the dance floor, hated by every woman in the club.

How absurd, she thought, to rush to the police. Helen was beyond help—had always been, in fact. And that Robinson fellow was too panicky to escape. Every clue would lead straight to him.

Time enough to offer what she knew to the law later that evening —after the dance.

This decision gave her a great sense of relief. She drew the blinds to the window that overlooked the Wade place, and dressed hastily. And a short time later she whirled away merrily to meet Wallace at the country club.

She was delighted that the murder wasn't spoiling things for her after all. The martinis were chill and strong, and the music cheerful and bouncy. She had never felt lovelier. Her dancing feet skimmed the floor; her laughter tinkled like a xylophone; her wicked glances kept the eager males cutting in, while their wives uttered futile cracks about Theda Bara. Her quips and squeals amused and enchanted her partners.

Toward the end of the party even Wallace commented on her success. His thoughtful features lit up with a rare smile. "I've never seen you more charming, my dear," he said.

"Oh, darling," she cried. "I wouldn't have missed this for the world."

"You rascal," he said endearingly. "You grow prettier each year. It's a wonder other women still speak to you."

She squeezed his arm and laughed. "They will, they always will. They know with me it's only a game. I just love the game. And I love you."

His eyes misted, as they always did at this invention. Involuntarily he touched his white hair, then smiled at her fondly. "This is the year, by George!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I'll take the summer off, the whole summer!"

"Wallace! You don't mean—"

"I do! We'll make the grand tour. Paris, Rome, Venice—"

She squealed. For years Wallace had been promising a trip abroad, and for years his numerous business deals had prevented it. She embraced him and kissed him right there on the dance floor.

Immediately, the prospect of a divine summer unfolded in Letty's mind like a movie montage. The shops of the Champs Elysees and the Via Vento shimmered challengingly before her, along with priceless images of herself reclining in a gondola as a tenor throbbed away; and of the aristocracies of Europe keeping one magnificent ball after another going in her honor.

Her dream brought the dance to an ecstatic climax, and there

wasn't a moment she could spare for nasty thoughts of murder.

Therefore, it came as a shock when a stolid-faced individual appeared after dinner to request her presence at police headquarters.

Wallace was even more shocked, especially when the officer told them of Helen's murder.

"But why must Letty come?"

The officer shrugged. "No servants around here this afternoon. Nobody within a hundred yards of the murder except the missus here."

"Humph," said Wallace.

But he accompanied Letty, who was unusually silent, on the ride to headquarters. She felt no sympathy whatever for Philip Robinson. In fact, she despised him. But there was something more important than vengeance to consider.

"Murder trials drag on for eons, don't they?" she asked Wallace.

"Seem to, what with all the appeals killers can make. But all I know is what I read."

She nodded dismally. She, too, had followed the interminable course of many trials. As the indispensable witness against Robinson she would be a prisoner, in a sense, for many months.

Tears flooded her eyes at the thought of calling off the trip that summer.

"There there," said Wallace. He patted her hand comfortingly. "It's a pity about Helen, but you mustn't let it upset you so." He snuggled her closer. "You *don't* know anything about this mess, do you?"

"Oh, Wallace," she said. She wept into his lapel. He continued to pat her silently.

At headquarters, a gaunt sour-faced man, Detective Hood, did all the questioning. Letty was forced to sit on a squeaking cane chair that threatened to collapse at any moment. Even more irritating was the glare of a naked light bulb; it must be making her horridly unbecoming, turning her crimson lips into a ghastly purple.

"You're sure you didn't see or hear anything out of order this afternoon?"

"I've told you," she said fretfully, eyeing the dribble of cigar ash on Hood's lapel. "I was making up. I was preparing for a dance."

"That doesn't make you blind and deaf, does it?"

"Really," she said. *"Really!"*

"Sorry," Hood said. "I always get nasty when a pretty young woman is murdered. Excuse me. Now, in this case, Mrs. Andrews, there are clear signs of a violent struggle. Noises accompany struggles of this sort. High-pitched, loud, angry noises. Which you almost certainly would hear."

"Even if I had the radio on?"

"*Did* you have the radio on?"

"I must have if I didn't hear. Mustn't I?"

She gave him her cutest puppy-dog look, but Hood apparently didn't like dogs. He simply scowled and dribbled more cigar ash.

"Look here," said Wallace Andrews. "If Letty knew something she'd tell you. Why shouldn't she?"

"Who knows?" said Hood. "Who knows anything about dames?"

He gestured to a cop. The cop disappeared, returned with Phil Robinson. The killer's face was a scared-white and haggard. For the second time that day his eyes met Letty's. He sighed, and looked at the floor.

"You know this man?" asked Hood.

"It's Philip Robinson," said Letty.

"You've seen him at the Wade's?"

"Certainly. It's been an open scandal. For months he carried on with Helen while her poor husband was slaving away on Wall Street—"

"Yes. We know all that." Hood looked hard at her. "The key question, Mrs. Andrews, is this: Did you see him there today?"

She glanced at Robinson's downcast head. He seemed overwhelmed with defeat and despondency. His hair was slicked down with some sort of grease. She shuddered delicately, revolted by the thought of the late Helen Wade running her fingers through such a sticky mess.

"No," she said.

Hood sagged a little. "You're absolutely certain? This is very important."

"I did not see him," she said, with annoyed hauteur.

Robinson's eyes, amazed and baffled, met hers once more before he was led away.

Hood's face was bitter. "A million to one that guy did it, but without one good witness—"

He shrugged in defeat.

On the way home Wallace spoke thoughtfully. "Curious reaction from Robinson. Seemed he almost expected you to put the finger on him."

"Please, Wallace, must you use gangster slang?" Tears gushed to her eyes. "This whole thing has given me a splitting headache. That horrid bulb. That cigar—"

"Of course, kitten," he said soothingly. "You're not meant for the nasty things of life." He stroked her ear tenderly, protectively. "My little sugar plum, my little good-time girl."

She purred, comforted.

The European trip proved to be her rosy dream come true. Letty raided so many shops that Wallace—for all his money—was a bit staggered, but she whimpered so prettily at his protests that he always yielded.

The only thing wrong with the trip was its being so tightly and merrily packed with plane hops, parties, shopping, and a host of other goodies that it all, finally, merged into one great blur.

So it was almost a relief to be back home on this day in late September. Letty had spent the morning supervising the installation of gaily-colored lanterns in the garden, for that evening's gala homecoming party. She had conferred with her cook and with the town caterer. The liquor was already delivered; the ice was ordered. The workmen had come and gone. There were to be two barmen with white jackets and cute little red hats, and two quaint peasant women she'd brought back with her from Italy working in the kitchen, and a small band to make the night merry.

Alone in the garden, Letty was happily putting the final gloss on the preparations. Where the autumn garden was drab, she set out large vases of cut flowers. She did this carefully, placing each vase in at least a dozen spots before she was really and truly satisfied.

She was almost finished with this task when a man stepped out from behind a thick hedge. She gasped. It was Philip Robinson.

"Well!" she said. "What do you want? Go away!"

"Why did you do it?" he demanded. "You saw me that day. Why didn't you tell those cops?"

Letty tried to remember, but the suddenness of his appearance had confused her. "Because—oh—I don't know! What difference does it make now?"

"A big difference—to me. I can't figure it out. You got me worrying night after night. You're a f l u t t e r y dame—unpredictable. What if you decide to talk?"

"Oh, bother!" she cried. "I didn't talk, did I? At least you might show some gratitude by leaving me alone." She glanced worriedly at a large potted palm, put in the wrong spot by someone who could hardly be very sensitive. It threw the entire decor off balance. "Can't you see, my dear man, that I'm preparing a *party?* And you're *definitely* not invited!"

"I can't live decently this way," he said hoarsely, and as if he hadn't heard. "How can I ever relax, ever get a good night's sleep?"

"Tush. So long as you're here, be of some use." She gestured at the potted palm. "Do help me move it—"

"You're playing cat and mouse with me," he said. "You've been doing that all along!"

She looked at him in amazement. Her fingers fluttered nervously to her face.

"And I want you to know," he said wildly, "that I don't like being the mouse. You got the power to finish me off any time you

want to. And you would if you lived."

"If?" she repeated. She laughed uncertainly.

"There's no *if* about it." He took an automatic from his pocket. "This situation's driving me crazy!"

He raised the automatic. A shot exploded. Letty swayed. She screamed again and again, with aristocratic reserve, her hands pressed over her eyes.

Philip Robinson collapsed on the lawn. Letty kept on screaming with aristocratic reserve.

A thickset man appeared near the hedge, revolver in its holster.

He shook Letty gently, until she stopped screaming.

Mascara-muddied tears streaked Letty's pretty face. "I—I don't understand."

"I'm a private detective," the man said quietly. "Your husband hired me to tail Robinson. He had a hunch he might try something rough. Thoughtful man, your husband. Good hunch."

"Oh dear," Letty said She valiantly wiped away tears, swallowed the lump in her throat. "I'm so *upset.* You see, I'm preparing a gala party—a homecoming party. The soiree of all soirees."

The detective nodded, but at the same time looked perplexed.

"It was going to be such a lovely affair," Letty wailed heartbrokenly. "Japanese lanterns, music, costumes—just everything. Very close friends we haven't seen in ages are coming."

The detective nodded again. Letty quieted abruptly and a tentative smile illumined her face. "I wonder," she said. "Do you dare?" Her fingers started toying with his tie, as she looked at him with small-girl wistfulness and yearning. "Could you be a dear" she said wheedlingly. "Wallace will pay you well. Couldn't you just drag it—him—out of sight and cover him up? Just temporarily?"

She turned away. She did not see the man attempt to get understanding by scratching the back of his head. Red and yellow lanterns bobbed like great flowers in a gentle breeze. The lawn was velvety, inviting. With the coming of darkness, the garden would glow, resound with music, clinking glasses, laughter. She smiled expectantly.

"You can tell the police later," she said absentmindedly as she walked over to the potted palm. "After the party. But first will you give me a hand with this? It's simply driving me out of my mind!"

by Helen Nielsen

Once a salesman gets his foot in the door, there is only one thing you can do: buy a new door. It is therefore most convenient, if the salesman in question happens to be a door salesman—a happenstance you can't really depend on. So you see, being a customer is really almost as difficult as being a salesman.

THE call came over the loudspeaker above the used car lot at 3PM.

"Mr. Cornell, you're wanted on the telephone. Mr. Cornell, telephone—please."

It was a godsend, Cornell felt. Mr. Garcy was in a bad mood and so somebody had to take a beating. Here of late that somebody always seemed to be him. It wasn't fair and Garcy knew it. There were slack periods in the auto market when nothing moved. Sales were down in the new car show room, too. What was he supposed to do—hypnotize the customers? The woman hadn't wanted the blue Olds; she didn't like blue. Even Jack Richards, who was almost twenty years younger than Glenn Cornell and who always wore a perky little bow tie that charmed the feminine trade, couldn't sell a blue car to a woman who didn't like blue no matter how good a buy it was.

"Mr. Cornell, you're wanted on the telephone . . ."

Cornell took advantage of the chance to break away from Garcy and made it to the office before the girl on the switchboard could finish her second call. The voice on the telephone was masculine—young, definite.

"Is this Garcy Motors on Sutter Street? Mr. Cornell? You had a black Cadillac on the used car lot a few days ago—a '57 sedan. I think it had a card on it—$3750. Yes, that's the one I mean. Is it still there? It is? Good. I'm coming by to look it over as soon as I get off work. If it runs as good as it looks, you've got a sale."

"It does," Cornell insisted. "It handles like a new car and carries a new car guarantee What time will you be in? 5:30? Fine. I'll have her warmed up and ready. Say, what's your name so I'll know you? Berra? Okay, Mr. Berra, I'll see you at 5:30."

When Mr. Berra hung up, Glenn dropped the telephone in the cradle. He raised his head and found himself eye level with the salesmen's rating chart Mr. Garcy always kept in plain sight. There had been six names on the chart, but the last two had lines drawn through them. Mr. Garcy never erased a name when he let a man go. He left it there, cancelled out by a chalk line, as a grim reminder of what could happen to any-

one whose sales dropped too low. The name just above the last chalk line was Glenn Cornell. He turned around and saw Mr. Garcy standing in the doorway.

"A customer of mine," Cornell said with forced brightness. "He's been looking at the black Caddy. I'm taking him out on a demonstration ride at 5:30."

It wasn't much of a lie. Cornell had never laid eyes on Mr. Berra; but Garcy didn't know that, and it was worth stretching the story a bit to see the way his expression altered from surprise to near disappointment and then to one of the leers he used for a smile.

"Good man!" Garcy said. "He's really interested. Sell him, Cornell. Don't let him get away. He's on the hook. All you have to do is reel him in."

It was more than a pep talk; it was an order. Cornell vowed then and there that he'd sell the black Caddy to Mr. Berra if it was the last thing he did.

Exactly one week later, at a few minutes before 11 PM, a patrol car answering a neighborhood complaint found a black Cadillac parked in an alley behind a lumber yard, about 2 miles across town from Garcy Motors. A man was slumped over the steering wheel, his chin pressing down on the horn rim and the horn, according to the complainant, had been sounding for nearly an hour. The first officer out of the patrol car opened the right front door of the Cadillac.

"Hey, mister," he called above the din of the horn, "this is no way to sleep off a drunk. You're keeping people awake." And then he paused and leaned forward, sniffing at the interior of the sedan. "Bring your flash over here!" he shouted to his companion. "I think this car's full of fumes!"

The second officer appeared at his shoulder and inhaled deeply.

"Not gas," he said. "Smells more like burnt alfalfa."

But when the light from the flash caught the man slumped over the steering wheel, both officers fell silent. He wasn't drunk; he was dead. Glenn Cornell would never sell anything to anyone after what the .45 slug had done to the right side of his head.

Hazel Cornell was a nice looking woman in spite of the grief in her eyes. Twenty year ago, Police Detective Sommers decided, she must have been the prettiest bride of the season. Now she was a widow. She didn't cry—praise heaven for that! There were dark shadows under her eyes and a tightness about her mouth; otherwise, she might have been a typical housewife who had donned her best cotton dress and a small hat with blue flowers on the brim that was usually worn only to church, and come down to report a mischie-

vous neighborhood child, or some other minor disturbance.

But Police Detective Sommers handled homicide cases.

"I know what I told the police officers last night," she said, "and I know how it all looks. But I knew my husband, too. It isn't true what was printed in the papers this morning. Glenn didn't kill himself. He was a religious man. He wouldn't take his life."

Her voice was low but firm, the inner tension held in careful check. Sommers glanced down at the Cornell file open on his desk. All of her statements of the previous night were there.

"But Mrs. Cornell," he remonstrated, "you admitted that your husband had been depressed and in ill health."

"Not really ill health," she said. "His cough had been bothering him some. Glenn had bronchitis when he was a child. Ever so often, his cough came back. It was nothing new. He wouldn't have killed himself for that."

"But you also said that he was worried about the prospective customer for the car he was trying to sell. He'd been working on the deal all week without getting a definite answer. He came home for dinner last night and refused to eat."

"He had a headache," she explained.

"He went to his room for about ten minutes and then came out again, saying that he was going to meet Mr. Berra and—" Sommers glanced down at the report again. "—put an end to the indecision."

"'I've got him on the hook,' he told me. 'All I have to do is reel him in.'"

"Ten minutes," Sommers repeated, ignoring the interpolation. "Now, Mrs. Cornell, didn't you identify the gun found on the seat beside your husband's body as his own gun, which, you stated, was kept in his bureau drawer?"

"Yes, but Glenn—"

"And the ballistic test has proved that your husband was killed by a bullet fired from that gun."

"But Glenn didn't fire the gun!"

She wasn't excited; she was adamant. She hadn't come alone. Sprawled in the chair —beside her, a teen-age youth stirred restlessly at her words.

"Mom, I wish you wouldn't get so worked up," he said.

"I'm not worked up, Andy," she replied quietly. "I'm merely telling this officer the truth. Your father didn't commit suicide."

It wasn't going to be easy to talk her out of such conviction. She was a firm woman. She must have been a devoted wife, and must be a good mother, an uncomplicated personality who was still in a state of semi-shock from learning that such an evil as violent death could happen in her orderly life.

Sommers tried again. "Mrs. Cornell," he said, "do you realize what your statement means? If your husband didn't commit suicide, he must have been murdered. Do you know anyone who might have wanted to murder your husband?"

"Oh, no. Glenn had no enemies."

"And yet you insist that he was murdered."

"It might have been a hold-up. He was driving that expensive car. Someone might have thought he had money."

She was grasping at straws, illusory straws.

"But you identified Mr. Cornell's personal effects at the morgue," he reminded. "His wallet, containing $17, his key case, his cough drops—"

"That cough of his," she said. "He was never without them."

"—his wrist watch and his wedding ring. Nothing was taken. Men had been murdered for much less than $17, Mrs. Cornell, but your husband wasn't one of them."

"Then it must have been a mad man," she said. "One of those crazed fiends we read about."

If she wasn't going to change her mind, Sommers could at least take the out offered him.

"It might have been," he admitted.

"Or Mr. Berra. Have you found Mr. Berra?"

Her eyes were accusing him across the desk. But Sommers had never seen a clearer case of self-inflicted death. There had been no indication of a struggle in the car. He'd gone there himself as soon as the patrol car radioed in. No struggle, obviously. And there were no fingerprints on the gun except Glenn Cornell's. He opened his mouth to answer, but Andy beat him to it.

"Mom," he pleaded, "the police know what they're doing. Leave it be."

"No, they don't know. Not when they tell the reporters that your father committed suicide. They should at least talk to Mr. Berra."

She stood up, a small, determined woman without tears.

"Glenn Cornell did not kill himself," she said.

She turned and left the office, and Andy scrambled to his feet to follow. He hesitated in front of the desk.

"Don't mind my mother," he said. "She's all upset, you see. She just can't believe it."

He was a good-looking kid, ruddy-faced, short pale blond hair, broad shoulders encased in a school sweater with a huge S over his chest.

"But you can believe it, is that it?" Sommers asked.

"Sure, I understand. A man's confidence can go. His pride. I mean, maybe this customer he was trying to sell cracked wise, or maybe old Garcy was riding him too hard. Some bosses are like

that. As soon as they smell chicken, they're like a wolf sniffing blood."

"Chicken?" Sommers echoed. "Are you trying to tell me that you think your father was chicken?"

Andy Cornell flushed red up to his close-cropped hair.

"Look, I didn't mean— Well, anyhow, I know he could be pushed around."

"How old are you, Andy?"

"Sixteen."

"And nobody pushes you around, do they?" Sommers asked.

"I'll say they don't!"

Sommers' eyes held the boy for a few seconds and then dismissed him. Andy went out, but long after he'd gone Sommers stared after him. At least the boy had inadvertently explained what was behind his mother's refusal to face the obvious. "Chicken," he repeated to himself. It wasn't much of an obituary. He could at least talk to Mr. Berra.

A row of red and white pennants dangled listlessly above the used car lot of Garcy Motors on Sutter Street, limp reminders of a sale that wasn't being patronized. Inside the showroom office, Mr. Garcy showed a similar lack of enthusiasm for his inquisitive caller. He'd already had to cope with a couple of reporters. Suicide. That was a bad subject to fool around with. Morbid. Could give a place a bad name.

"To be honest with you, Officer," he said, "and I am honest with everyone, I wasn't too surprised when the police called me down last night to identify Cornell's body and my Cadillac. Not surprised that he'd killed himself, I mean. The man was on the down grade—not up to par at all. A few years ago he topped the list on that sales chart month after month, slack season and heavy; but lately he'd lost his drive. Brought his problems to work with him. That's bad. When a man can't leave his problems at home, he's bound to hit the skids."

"Problems? What problems?"

"Any problems. We all have them, don't we? Family problems, health problems, money problems; but we learn to keep them out of our work. Not Cornell. Excuses, always excuses. His boy stayed out too late at night so he couldn't get any sleep. His boy was getting in with a bad crowd at high school. He didn't want his boy going wrong. I tell you, Officer, if Glenn Cornell had had five or six kids he'd have been alive today. He'd have to give up worrying long ago."

Sommers thought of Andy Cornell—tall, blond, handsome.

"His son hasn't been in trouble, has he?"

"Andy? Of course not. Good kid, Andy. Wish I had a son just like him. My luck—four girls. But Cornell worried just the same.

Maybe it was physical. He had headaches a lot—took pills all the time, and always had trouble with his throat. Never smoked. But he'd been with me for nearly eleven years, and I hate to let a man go."

Garcy's eyes inadvertently strayed to the chart on the wall. Sommer's followed. "Moroni, Taber—" he read aloud. "What does the chalk line indicate, Mr. Garcy?"

Garcy scowled.

"I can't carry dead weight. I've got a business to run."

Sommers nodded.

"Cornell," he added, reading the next name above the discharged salesmen. Silence filled in for the things nobody said. "So you think he was sufficiently depressed to have committed suicide."

"Depressed, unstable—use whatever term you want to use Officer. The fact is still the same. He did kill himself, didn't he?"

Of course he'd killed himself. Nothing had ever been more obvious, and yet Sommers, irritated by one derisive word, had to keep asking questions.

"What about Mr. Berra?" he queried. "Did you talk to him?"

Garcy's expression changed from bridled impatience to momentary bewilderment.

"Who?" he asked.

"Berra. Cornell's customer for the Cadillac. Mrs. Cornell has told us that her husband had taken the death car from the lot in order to close a deal with a Mr. Berra."

Garcy met Sommer's gaze with unblinking eyes.

"I don't think there was a Mr. Berra," he said. "I'm serious, Officer. I know, I told your men the same story Mrs. Cornell told them last night; but I've had time to think it over, and I'm convinced the whole thing was a fabrication. I'll tell you why I think it. It began last Friday—a week ago yesterday. Cornell had muffed what should have been a sure sale—that was just before noon. I had a luncheon date at my club and had to leave, but I told him I wanted to have a talk with him when I returned. He was in trouble, and he knew it. It was almost three o'clock before I got back. I'd no more than gone out to the lot to speak with Cornell—he was in charge of the used car sales—than a call came over the loudspeaker for Mr. Cornell to go to the telephone. I followed him back to the office and got there in time to hear him making an appointment with a Mr. Berra to demonstrate the black Caddy at 5:30."

"Didn't Berra show?" Sommers asked.

"He did not. At about 5:15 there was another call. I usually go home at 5, but I was staying around to see how Cornell would handle this sale. The second call was from Berra again. He couldn't make it down to the lot in time, but if Cornell would drive over

to a service station at the corner of 3rd and Fremont he could pick him up and demonstrate the car from there. It sounded all right, so I let him go."

"When did he come back?"

"I don't know," Garcy said. "I went on home. In the morning, the Caddy was back on the lot, but Cornell told me he had a sure sale just as soon as Mr. Berra raised the cash. I got after him about pushing for a low down payment, but he said Berra didn't want to finance—that he only did business on a cash basis and would have the money in a few days. I didn't think much about it at the time, but now, thinking back, I realize that Cornell was acting strange even then."

"Strange?" Sommers echoed. "In what way?"

"I don't know exactly. He didn't seem to want to talk about Berra, except to assure me that he was sold on the car and would raise the money. Usually the salesmen chew the fat a little about their clients, brag on how they handle them, or even have a few anecdotes; but Cornell was like a clam. I even tried to pump him. I asked him if Berra worked at the service station where he'd picked him up. He said no, he didn't think so, and that was all I got out of him. Three days later—no, four, Tuesday, it was. Last Tuesday I asked him if he'd heard from Berra and told him to get on the ball and not let the customer get cold. That afternoon he took the Caddy and said he was going to drive over to Berra's house. He came back about half an hour later saying that nobody was home and he'd try again."

"And did he?"

"I don't know. I only know that on Thursday—day before yesterday—Mr. Berra called back. This time he said that he'd raised the money. His mother, who lived in Pasadena was putting up the full amount on the condition Cornell would drive him over to her house and let her inspect the car first. I thought then that it sounded fishy, but a $3750 cash sale isn't something you toss in the waste basket, and I trusted Cornell. I told him to go ahead, but to—"

Garcy hesitated and a little color came up in his face.

"But what?" Sommers prodded.

"I was only kidding, of course."

"But what, Mr. Garcy?"

"But not to come back until he'd closed the deal."

The silence in the shop was broken only by the distant sound of voices in the back lot garage.

"And did he come back?" Sommers asked.

"No. He called in yesterday morning and said he'd run into a little difficulty, but would get it straightened out before the day was over. He still had the Caddy with him." Garcy's face was no longer red; it was chalk white. "Damn it, it was only a figure of

speech! I didn't mean for the man to blow out his brains!"

Sommers let Mr. Garcy indulge in his anguish without interruption. The well-adjusted machinery of his own mind was tabulating and arranging certain facts. All of them led him to one question.

"Mr. Garcy," he said, "you've just told me that this man, Berra, telephoned Cornell here at the office three different times, and yet you started out by saying that you didn't think the man existed. How do you account for that?"

"Timing," Garcy responded, grateful for a change of thought. "I got to thinking about it this morning. Cornell got that first call just after I'd started dressing him down for fluffing the other sale—at a time when he knew I'd be talking to him because I'd told him as much before I went to lunch. And then, there's the way he dragged out this deal for a whole week, all the time insisting the car was as good as sold. I think he'd already flipped, Officer. I think he'd so lost his confidence that he rigged up Mr. Berra out of his imagination and fixed it with some friend to make the calls just to make it look good. I never saw the man. Nobody on the premises saw him, and Cornell never told us anything about him. The switchboard girl heard his voice—a young man, she says. Maybe it was his son. But I still think Mr. Berra doesn't exist."

Garcy could be right, but something stuck in Sommer's mind. No not his mind; his senses. The senses absorbed and retained in an instant what the mind needed time to analyze. Some small thing. He scowled over the nagging thought of it.

"You say that Cornell took the car to Berra's house," he said. "Did he tell you where the house was?"

"No, he didn't. He said it wasn't far, and he was back in half an hour."

"Could he have jotted down the address somewhere—in his sales book, for instance?"

"You can look through his desk if you want to. Believe me, if I could locate this Berra I'd have a few questions for him myself. Do you know how many miles Cornell put on that Caddy last week? Nearly two hundred. I checked the mileage down at the police garage last night. I have to keep an eye on that kind of thing. Some of the young salesman like to take a late model out on their dates at night and eat up the fuel. Little things like that can wipe out a businessman's profits. It only takes one leak to sink a ship, if it's neglected long enough."

Sommer's ignored the lecture and went to work on Cornell's desk. There was ample evidence of other customers—names, addresses and telephone numbers, but nothing concerning Mr. Berra.

"You see," Garcy told him. "He

made up this customer out of the whole cloth. It's tragic when a man's so weak he has to resort to lies to keep up a front."

Chicken. Garcy's vocabulary was thirty years removed from Andy Cornell's, but they were saying the same thing. For Sommer's, it was just another goad to keep looking.

"Third and Fremont," he mused aloud.

"What's that?" Garcy asked.

"The location of the gas station where Cornell was to meet Berra."

"Oh, sure. That's what he said. Look, Officer—" Garcy's words stopped Sommers at the door. "If you want to go on looking for Mr. Berra, that's your business. Selling cars is mine. I'd like to get that Caddy back on the lot in time for the Sunday display."

"I'll have it cleaned up and brought over to you, Mr. Garcy," Sommers answered. "In the meantime, there's something you can do to jack up your sales force and keep them on their toes."

"Yes? What's that?"

"Draw a line through Cornell's name," he said. "On that chart."

According to the lettering on the canopy, the manager of the service station at the corner of 3rd and Fremont was a man named Max Fuller. It was a busy intersection and several minutes elapsed before Detective Sommers could command Fuller's attention. Even then it was hardly undivided. They stepped inside the office, but Fuller kept a wary eye on his assistant.

"New kid on the pumps," he explained. "Have to watch 'em the first few days. Police, isn't it? What's on your mind? Selling tickets to something?"

Sommers wasn't selling tickets to anything. He explained what was on his mind, and, as he did so, Fuller forgot about his pumps.

"Berra?" he echoed, at the sound of the name. "Say, what's this guy done, anyway?"

It was an interesting response.

"What do you mean?" Sommers asked.

"Well, there was a fellow in here yesterday asking for the same man. Wanted to know if anyone of that name worked here, or if I knew where he could find him. I told him I'd never heard of the name, so he described him to me. A young fellow, he said. Twenty, maybe, but no more. Swarthy skin, dark hair and eyes, expensive looking clothes. The description didn't ring any bells, so he goes on to tell me a story about having picked up this Berra here at my station nearly a week ago. Craziest thing I ever heard."

"Crazy," Sommers echoed. "In what way?"

"In every way. The way he picked up Berra. He drove over to the side of the building, see, so as not to block off my pumps. He cut

the motor, figuring he'd have to come inside the office to find the person he was supposed to meet; but before he could get out of the car, the door of the men's room opened and Berra came out of it—running, he said, with his head ducked down. Berra pulled open the car door, asked if he was Mr. Cornell—"

"Cornell?" Sommer's repeated.

"That's the name of the fellow who came in here yesterday asking about Berra. Cornell said he was, and so Berra got into the car. 'Okay,' he says, 'let's go.' Cornell is a car salesman, you see. The fellow who came running out of the rest room had called him about buying a black Cadillac—"

Max Fuller's voice broke abruptly. He'd been cleaning his hands on a wipe cloth as he talked. When he dropped it on the desk, his eyes caught the front page of the morning paper that had been staring up at him all this time. One story had a black headline: Auto Salesman Suicide Victim. He followed the story for a few lines and then looked up, puzzled.

"Why, that's the guy," he said. "The same one who was in here yesterday."

"The same one," Sommers agreed. "Tell me, did you see the man—Cornell described—the day he was supposed to have come running out of the men's room?"

"No, sir, I didn't. Late in the afternoon—this was at 5:30, he said—things are really jumping around here. People coming home from work, you know. I don't have a chance to watch anything, but the pump meters. To tell you the truth, I don't even remember Cornell driving in, but he sure could have without me noticing. You can see for yourself. There's plenty of area out there for a man to park a car clear of the pumps."

Sommers moved back to the doorway. Fuller was right. It must have been thirty feet from the station office to the edge of the lot—an inner edge where a two-story commercial building rose up like a tall, windowless wall. A man could park his car clear of the pump area and not be noticed by anyone during the rush hours. By the same token, a man coming out of the rest room, which was in the rear end of the station building, would have been shielded from view.

"And you keep the rest rooms locked, I suppose," Sommers said.

"Have to," Fuller answered. "Company orders. Sure wish I didn't. Those darned rooms give me more trouble than the rest of the business put together. I could write a book!"

"Mind if I look at it?"

"Go ahead. I've got to get back to my customers. If I can be of any help, let me know. I doubt it though. I couldn't help Cornell. He left here saying he was going to the other station."

Sommers had started to leave. He paused outside the doorway.

"The other station?" he echoed.

"The other service station," Fuller explained. "The one down at 8th and California. He told me that was where he left Berra after demonstrating the car. He sure seemed anxious to find that guy Berra. Crazy story, isn't it? Stories, when they're crazy like that, they stick in your mind."

It was a crazy story. Sommers wondered how Garcy would have reacted to the tale he'd just heard. Would he still believe Berra didn't exist, or would he point out what was still an annoying fact: that nobody, except the dead man, had seen Berra? He went around the building and proceeded to inspect the men's room. It was exceptionally clean. The company could give the management a seal of approval for cleanliness. There wasn't a thing out of order or out of place. Not a thing. The waste basket was in full view, the towel dispenser was filled, there wasn't so much as a leaky faucet or a dripping plumbing pipe. And there was no apparent evidence of Berra's having been in the room a week ago. Sommers made a careful inspection of the lavatory. It was an inexpensive casting with a hollow rim. He ran an exploratory finger along the under edge until it touched something unfamiliar. He squatted on his heels and examined the area by the flame of his cigarette lighter. There was a lump of something that looked a little like hardened chewing gum, but that scraped off on his finger nail into slivers of lead. Solder. Liquid solder. There were fragments of several lumps of it dotting the under side of the fixture. He didn't scrape off any more of it. He snapped off the lighter and stood up.

What did it mean? Chewing gum he would have understood, but not liquid solder. He left the rest room and went back to his car. For a few moments he sat parked in view of the spot where Cornell must have parked a week before his death. The door of the rest room was in full view. If it had been ajar when Cornell arrived, it would have been an easy matter for anyone waiting inside to see and recognize a specific model that had been requested to call for him. A very special form of taxi service—but to where? Max Fuller had told him. Another service station at the corner of 8th and California.

The station at 8th and California was an independent—not so modern or so clean as the one Sommers had just visited, but twice as busy. The reason for that was the garage about twenty-five yards behind the pump area. It was there that Sommers located a stout, balding man in overalls whose name was Donnegan, and who owned the business. Like Max Fuller,

Donnegan had a story to tell. Cornell had been in the previous day inquiring after the same party —a man named Berra.

"I don't know anybody by that name, let alone employ him," Donnegan explained. "All I've got on the payroll are relatives. I don't say they work, mind you, but they're on the payroll. Might as well be. I feed them anyway."

"What did Cornell say about Berra," Sommers asked.

"Just what I told you," Donnegan said. "Asked if I knew him. Told me how he looked—young, dark, well dressed. Said he'd dropped him off here a week ago after taking him for a demonstration ride in the '57 Cad Cornell was driving. Berra wanted to buy it, he said. Made him promise not to sell it to anyone else. Said he was going to meet his father here and put the bite on him."

"Here?" Sommers echoed.

"Yeah. That's a good one, isn't it? The car salesman fell for it, too. You'd think those guys would get used to dead beats playing them for suckers. Still, for a commission I guess a man will go a long way."

"Two hundred miles," Sommers said.

"How's that?"

Sommers didn't bother to explain, but it was hardly more than half a mile from Fuller's garage to Donnegan's. Allowing for a demonstration ride, there were still a lot of miles to account for to reach that two hundred total Garcy had complained about.

"Did Cornell tell you anything else?" he asked. "Did he mention where he was going when he left here?"

"No, he didn't say anything about that," Donnegan answered, "but he did tell me one peculiar thing. He said this fellow Berra, when he got out of the Cad to meet his father here, ducked his head and ran for the men's room. 'Maybe he was car sick,' I cracked, but Cornell didn't laugh. He seemed worried or puzzled. Maybe that's a better word—puzzled."

It was a good word because Sommers was puzzled, too. Something was beginning to take shape, some vague pattern—but of what? The man Garcy had insisted didn't exist was becoming more real. A young man—a young voice on the telephone. A perturbed salesman retracing his route a week after he'd first taken it, and a day after Berra's second call. He wouldn't have gone to those lengths to search for someone, he'd put up to concocting a prospective sale in order to get him off the hook with Garcy. Sommers had one more thing to do before leaving Donnegan's station, and after he'd inspected the men's room he was even more puzzled. On the underside of the lavatory he found several lumps of hardened liquid solder. There was a pattern, all

right, but he needed more pieces before it could be meaningful.

Assuming that Mr. Berra did exist—why had he used Cornell for a chauffeur, and where else had they gone? Cornell had told his employer that he'd driven out to Berra's home, but that Berra wasn't in. Unless this was an outright lie, Berra must have given an address. It hadn't been in Cornell's desk, but there was a possibility that he'd jotted it down on a scrap of paper in his wallet. Sommers returned to headquarters and examined the dead man's effects. Nothing. A trail that had started out so promisingly had come to a dead end. There was only one other place to look.

Downstairs in the garage, Mr. Garcy's well-travelled Cadillac was ready to be returned to its owner. Cornell had been very neat with his dying. The upholstery wasn't bloodstained and the bullet had lodged in his skull thereby saving the door's glass. Properly advertised, the car would make a quick sale to some morbid individual. Sommers wasn't morbid; he was determined.

The instant he opened the door of the Cadillac, he was again aware of that sense of something known, but not recognized. He'd done this very thing not more than twelve hours ago—opened the door of the death car, to which he'd been summoned, and peered into the front seat. Was it something seen? No. Only Cornell and the gun that had fallen to the floorboards at his feet had been seen. But something smelled—yes, that was it: a pungent, smoky odor as if something had been burned. He opened the glove compartment. Nothing to explain the odor there—no oily rags or singed material of any kind; only one detailed price ticket from Garcy Motors and one city map.

One city map. Sommers was excited the instant he drew it out into the light. It was a new map, but it had been marked with a red pencil. Crosses, small red crosses at various locations. The more he studied the locations, the more interesting they became. One cross was at the corner of 3rd and Fremont; one at 8th and California. There were three others at widely separated locations: two on corners and one in the middle of the block. Add the distances together and double for round trips and a good piece was gone out of the missing two hundred miles. Now, he had three more chances to locate the illusive Mr. Berra.

Sommers pocketed the map and closed the glove compartment. The car was ready to roll now—cleaned, vacuumed, the ashtrays pushed in. Ashtrays. Now there was something to be seen. Last night the ashtray on the instrument panel had been open. Sommers yanked it out and examined the contents, overlooked in the

cleaning of the car, perhaps, because someone had pushed the ashtrays in. Glenn Cornell didn't smoke because of his delicate throat, and Garcy Motors would surely be more careful of a display model than to leave an ash tray full of stubs still faintly smelling of the weedy scent Sommers remembered from the previous night. And these were not standard cigarette stubs either; this was marijuana.

The pieces of the pattern were gathering fast. Sommers turned the contents of the ash tray over to the lab for analysis and got set for a tour of the city. There were three locations on the map to be identified. The first turned out to be a small independent grocery located across the street from a high school—the Charles Steinmetz High School. Sommers noted the name of the school with interest. He didn't linger at the grocery. Strolling in for a pack of cigarettes was enough to show him there was no one working inside answering the description of Mr. Berra. He didn't expect there would be. The second location on the map was even more interesting—an herb and health food shop operated by an oriental who, if not inscrutable was at least self-possessed. Sommers didn't know what he was going to do with the wheat germ flour he bought, but he did know the pattern was beginning to form a most interesting picture.

The third red cross on the map was in the middle of the block on a residential street, where aging bungalows were being replaced by modern multiple unit apartments. Without a house number, it would have been difficult to learn just what the third cross indicated except for the pattern in Sommers' mind. A man who didn't want to be found wouldn't give a correct address; he would give, if possible, an address where nobody lived. Vacant lots were the rule in such cases, but in this instance there was something even better. A house about to be moved stood like an empty shell with uncurtained windows and a collection of advertising throwaways cluttering the lawn and the front porch. *Nobody was home.* This is what Cornell had reported back to Mr. Garcy after calling on Berra. Nobody, certainly, was at home here. Sommers parked the car and began to examine the property for some sign of ownership.

At a casual glance, the building might have been only temporarily vacant; closer inspection showed the wreckers had already been at the porch foundations. Several brick pillars were in ruins and the brick fireplace just around the corner of the house was half-demolished. It was there that Sommers discovered the man with a

wheel barrow. The man looked up, surprised, a brick in each hand. These he promptly added to the growing pile on the wheelbarrow. When Sommers showed his badge, the man grinned.

"It's okay, Officer," he said. "I've got Mr. Peterson's permission to take these bricks. It's his house. We were neighbors for years. 'Go ahead, take 'em when they move the building,' he said. 'Finish your patio.' I don't know why I bother, to tell you the truth. One of these days, one of the buyers is going to offer me a price I can't resist and they'll be hauling my house away."

"Where's Mr. Peterson?"

"Gone to Carmel. Retired. Suppose that's where I'll be going someday."

"How long has it been since Mr. Peterson moved away?"

"From here you mean? Oh, he hasn't lived in this old house for seven or eight years. Rented it out. The last tenants left about three weeks ago. Glad to see 'em go, too. Most people in this world are fine —just fine. All nationalities, all races. But once in a while you run across some bad neighbors. This Berrini family—"

"Berrini?" Sommers echoed.

"That's right. Not a family, really. Couldn't blame the mother so much. She was a widow who had to work. Three young girls in elementary school to support, and two sons who should have been a help and never thought of anything but hot-rods and flashy clothes. The older one—Bruno—even served time at one of those juvenile delinquent work farms a few years ago. I don't know about Joe. He's still in high school."

"How about Bruno?" Sommers prodded. "How old is he now? What sort of looking fellow is he?"

The man with the wheelbarrow stared at him thoughtfully.

"Is Bruno in trouble again?" he asked. "He must be in trouble again. A man was here yesterday asking those very same questions. I don't think he was a police officer though. He was driving a big car, a big black Cadillac."

Cornell again. A trail that had started with a trip to 3rd and Fremont was almost completed. Only one more location was needed to fill in the gap that stretched between an abandoned dwelling and an alley behind a lumber company.

"Bruno's nice enough looking young fellow," the man was saying. "About twenty, I'd say, and a real flashy dresser. I don't know where he gets his money."

"I think I do," Sommers said grimly. "Do you know the Berrinis' new address?"

"Couldn't tell you that, Officer, but I suppose the Post Office people could. Wherever they moved, they have to get mail."

"That they do," Sommers said, "I've got something for Bruno Berrini myself—special delivery."

It was a very neat plan. Back at headquarters, Sommers conferred with Lieutenant Graves of Narcotics, and the little red crosses on the map found in the glove compartment took on significance.

"The way it looks to me," Sommers said, "the car salesman, Cornell, marked this map himself. Berrini, or Berra, as he called himself, would have been more careful. Cornell was used—that much must have been obvious to him yesterday morning when he called Garcy and said that he'd run into difficulty with the sale, but would have it straightened out before the day was over."

Graves nodded agreement.

"The used car routine is a new switch," he admitted. "We haven't run into it before. Berrini couldn't use his own car; if we spotted those delivery stations and watched them, it could be traced to him. The way he ducked his head and ran in and out of the rest rooms indicates how afraid he was of being seen. This scheme beats the stolen car method where there's always a resulting investigation that might lead to an arrest. Who would think of reporting a reluctant car buyer to the police?"

"Exactly," Sommers said. "Cornell didn't even dare report him to his employer. Imagine his feelings when he realized he'd been tricked into chauffeuring a marijuana peddler on his rounds. He must have spent that last day of his life retracing the places to which the illusive Mr. Berra had caused him to drive: the station at the corner of 3rd and Fremont, the station at 8th and California—that was the first day's route. Then he repeated the second trip: to the grocery store across from the high school and to the health food shop, checking the map as he went. By this time he knew what those locations meant. Berrini made one mistake. Maybe he was just too cocky, but on that second drive he smoked some of his own product. Cornell didn't smoke at all, and the fumes must have bothered his throat; in any event, something happened to draw his attention to the stubs I found in that ash tray."

Graves had listened intently; now he asked, "Why . . . ?"

"Because Cornell was shot with his own gun, a gun usually kept in his room. He went home, according to what his wife said, just long enough to have gone into his room and taken the gun. By that time, he must have located Berrini. He told his wife that he was going out to meet Berra and 'put an end to the indecision.'"

"'I've got him on the hook,' he told me. 'All I have to do is reel him in.'"

Mrs. Cornell's words intruded in Sommers mind. They fit into the pattern, too.

"A man doesn't go home to get his gun," he added, "if he's only going out to sell a car. The going

was a little rough for Cornell, but not that rough."

"That's one thing I don't understand," Graves remarked. "Granting that you're right and that Cornell did realize that he'd been used to deliver marijuana to the supply points on this map, why did he go after Berra himself? Why didn't he go to the police?"

There were alternative reasons. There was the possibility of attempted blackmail—that was the obvious one. Cornell had needed that sale badly enough to cling to it all week. He had enough on Berra to make him buy the car. There was also the possibility of anticipating a reward if he nailed a marijuana peddler; Cornell could have used a reward. But to know why a man does anything, it is necessary to know something about the man himself; and everything Sommers had learned about Glenn Cornell suggested that he was a good citizen and a conscientious father. He was risking his life when he went after Berrini. He must have known that a hopped up person was capable of anything. The only reason a man like Cornell would do such a thing was the kind of reason that stood tall and broad shouldered in a high school jersey with a big S on the chest. S for Steinmetz.

Graves listened to that possibility spelled out, and then asked, "Do you think Cornell's son is mixed up in this?"

"It isn't what I think that matters," Sommers said. "It's what Cornell feared. I'm going to do a little checking at Steinmetz. Right now, I'd be willing to give odds that Andy Cornell and Joe Berrini are pals and that Glenn Cornell knew about it and worried about it. I'm not looking into a crystal ball when I say that, either. The man who called Garcy Motors asked for Cornell by name. If Bruno Berrini's kid brother pals around with Andy Cornell, chances are he knew Andy's father was a salesman at Garcy's. He might even have known that he was easy going—'he could be pushed around' was the way Andy put it. I think that's your answer, Lieutenant. I think Cornell took his gun and went after Berrini on his own because he was afraid police action might hurt his son. Guilt can rub off on the innocent, too, especially when the innocent is an adolescent with more bravado than brains."

At least it was a reason, and there had to be a reason—even as there had to be a reason for the lumps of solder on the under sides of the two rest room lavatories.

"You may be right," Graves said. "It shouldn't be too difficult to find out what happened last night. We know the deposit points for the marijuana—all we have to do is watch. Berrini's used them before, the multiplicity of the soldering lumps indicate that some

kind of packet or container has been hidden under the lavatories more than once, and he'll use them again. Cornell's dead—a published suicide. What does he have to fear?"

Sommers was thoughtful. Lieutenant Graves' job seemed simple; his wasn't so easy.

"He may use the car salesman method of transportation again," he suggested. "You've got to admit, it's a good one. If it hadn't been for Cornell's curiosity and that marked map, we'd never have traced the black Caddy to him."

"And Berrini knows nothing of the map," Graves added.

"Of course not. He'd have destroyed it if he'd known. Lieutenant, I've got a request to make of your department. I want you to contact the used car dealers in this area and alert them to Berra's pitch. Chances are he'll be going through this same routine within the week."

"Within the week?" Graves echoed.

"It's the football season," Sommers said. "What's a logical place to peddle marijuana—particularly marijuana that's been delivered to the pushers before Saturday?"

Graves grinned.

"You've been nosing around in my detail," he said. "You know we've been getting reports from the football games."

"It's a report from a used car dealer that I'm interested in," Sommers said. "You want Berrini for passing narcotics—that's an easy job. I want him for something that's going to take a little doing. I'm going out now and take some instructions in how to sell an automobile."

"You?" Graves asked.

"Who else, Lieutenant? I'm the man who wants Berrini for murder."

Bruno Berrini was watched. Before the day was over, his new residence had been located in a stucco duplex within a few blocks of the house about to be moved. The school office was closed over the weekend, but on Monday it was learned that Joe Berrini, the younger brother, was a junior at Steinmetz High and a classmate of Andy Cornell. The two boys were seen together in the schoolyard on the day after Glenn Cornell's funeral, which was on Tuesday. It was the same day when Lieutenant Graves reported on the results of notifying the local used car dealers of Berrini's routine. He'd wasted no time in trying his trick again. He used his own product, and that gave him more daring than sense. This time it was a salesman named Hamilton from Economy Motors who had the same story to tell that Sommers had already pieced out of interviews with Max Fuller and the man named Donnegan. A man

who called himself Mr. Baron had telephoned in on the previous Friday and inquired about a '58 Buick displayed on the lot. Told it was still there, he expressed great interest and asked that a salesman pick him up for a demonstration ride at a service station on the corner of 3rd and Fremont. From there on the story was the same. Baron's peculiar conduct had puzzled the salesman, but customers could be peculiar.

"Friday," Sommers mused. "That's the same day he used Cornell the first time. I was right. He works on a schedule. He should call back about the Buick on Thursday. He had to divide these trips up, don't you see? No salesman would fall for making four stops on a trip. He'd be suspicious."

"So Berrini divides his distribution points into two parts and services them a week apart," Graves concluded.

They were right. On Thursday, Hamilton called in to report that Mr. Baron had decided to buy the Buick, but had to get the money, the full amount in cash, from his mother who insisted on seeing what he was buying before writing the check. Sommers and Graves went out to the lot together. By that time, Mr. Baron had called back to say he couldn't make it in, but would meet Mr. Hamilton in front of his home. The address given was the empty house.

Sommers got into the Buick.

"I'll be behind you," Graves told him. "Berrini will have the stuff on him, but I don't want to take him until he's made his deliveries. I want the receivers as well as the distributor."

"I want more than that," Sommers said. "I want a murderer."

He picked up Berrini in front of the house that still looked as if somebody had just washed the curtains and forgotten to pick up the throwaways from the porch. Berrini was a man of habit. He'd worked out a means of transportation to his delivery spots, but he wasn't prepared for a stranger behind the steering wheel. He balked at the curb.

"Where's Mr. Hamilton?" he demanded.

A young, dark, good-looking kid in a very sharp tweed jacket and slacks. He might have been all slicked up to go paying court to his girl, but Sommers knew a killer could look like an angel.

"Sick," he answered, trying to sound convincing. "He asked me to take his place."

Berrini hesitated. Was the word "cop" written all over Sommer's face, putting the lie to his story? If it was, he should be reaching for the holster under his coat. He didn't. He let the weight of the gun lean against his ribs, while Berrini's suspicious eyes passed judgment. The eyes were a little glassy. He was about ready to make that almost inevitable switch

from reefers to something more potent. His judgment wasn't good. Almost a week had passed since Cornell's death, and there had been no public notice of anything but obvious suicide. Berrini felt safe. He crawled into the front seat and gave an address. He said very little during the half hour that passed before Sommers pulled up before a ranch style home in one of the better districts. This was supposed to be where Berrini's mother lived. He waited for the story and it came.

"I don't see her car in the driveway," he said. "She must have gone to a little store a few blocks down the street. She buys a lot of this health food stuff. Let's drive down and see."

"Maybe you should ring the bell," Sommers suggested. "She might have left the car in the garage."

"She never leaves the car in the garage—never! She's at this store—I'll bet ten dollars. Just a few blocks—"

It was a thin story, but to a commission hungry salesman eager for a cash sale it would have been convincing. Sommers listened to the directions and then proceeded to the herb shop. He pulled up to the curb and parked about half a block ahead of the unmarked car in which Lieutenant Graves was waiting. Berrini went inside alone. Through the front window, Sommers observed him in earnest conversation with the proprietor, after which they went into the back room for a few moments. When Berrini came back into view, Sommers knew the first delivery had been completed; but the lieutenant wouldn't make his move until they had proceeded on the delivery route. That was the agreement between them. Berrini's supply points were the lieutenant's concern, but Berrini belonged to Sommers.

Berrini returned to the Buick with another story.

"She was in here a little while ago," he reported, "but they were out of what she wanted. The clerk sent her to another store. If you don't mind driving a little farther, we'll catch her there. This car's what I've been looking for."

So a man with a lagging sales record and a family to support would go along with the pitch. He'd come this far; he had to keep riding that sale. Sommers was beginning to get the feel of the part he was playing. Be pleasant, be nice, keep smiling. Pretend you don't know the next stop is a small independent market across the street from the Steinmetz High School. He glanced in the rear view mirror as the Buick edged away from the curb. Lieutenant Graves was sliding across the seat to get out of the unmarked sedan. Within minutes, he'd have relieved the herb shop proprietor of his latest consignment. So far, ev-

erything was working out according to plan.

It was almost dark when they reached the store. The schoolyard was deserted and the streets empty. Berrini went inside and Sommers, as he had done before, watched from the Buick. Five minutes passed, ten minutes, fifteen. Nobody else went into the store or came out of the store. Little independents didn't do a volume business, particularly not at an hour when housewives were already preparing the dinners their families were waiting to devour. Twenty minutes. Sommers crawled out of the Buick and scanned the street behind him. Something must have delayed Graves back at the herb store; there was no sign of his sedan. By this time Sommers knew what Glenn Cornell had learned at the end of his long drive. Berrini, Berra, Baron—whatever he called himself—wasn't coming back. This was the end of the line. Thanks for the ride, sucker, but I don't need you any more. Sommers gave the lieutenant five more minutes and then went into the store alone.

The balding proprietor was adamant. The gentleman must be mistaken. A dark young man in a tweed jacket? Here, in this store? Nobody had come into the store in almost an hour. Business was slow; it was closing time.

"I don't think so," Sommers said. "I think it's opening time." He pulled the badge from his pocket and thrust it under the man's startled eyes. "Open!" he ordered. "Where's Joe Berrini?"

The man's face reddened. "Who?" he stammered.

"Joe Berrini. He's in trouble—big trouble. You don't want to cover for a killer, do you?"

It was one thing to peddle marijuana to high school students, one thing to twist young lives so that they might never be whole again; but it was something entirely different to face a detective from Homicide and risk your own sweet freedom. One wild glance toward the rear of the store and Sommers had his answer.

"What's back there?" he demanded.

"Only the stockroom," the man protested. "Nothing else!"

There was only one reason for the man to scream the words. Sommers wouldn't listen to him, but Berrini would. There was no time to waste. The stockroom was dark, but beyond it a ribbon of light showed beneath a closed door. As Sommers moved toward it, the light disappeared. Now there was only a door—vague in the shadows—and behind it a man who knew why Glenn Cornell had died with his chin on the horn rim of a Cadillac he hadn't sold.

"Berrini!"

Sommers fired the word at the silence and dropped back against

the wall beside the door. He waited a few seconds and then—

"I'll give you to the count of three to come out, Berrini. If you don't want twice the trouble you've got now, you'll come quietly. We know you killed Glenn Cornell. We found a nice, clear print you forgot to wipe off his gun. One—two—"

It was a lie. There hadn't been a print on Cornell's gun that hadn't matched Cornell's own; but Sommers got no farther with his threat. The first interruption was an undistinguishable oath, and then the walls seemed to split open with the sound of gunfire. But Berrini wasn't shooting at the door. Berrini wasn't shooting at all. Sommers discovered that when he jerked open the door and let the fading finger of light from the front of the store stretch to the place where Berrini crouched with his arms folded over his face as if they could stop the .45 leveled at the back of his head from splitting open his skull.

"Drop the gun!" Sommers ordered. "Drop it on the floor!"

For about five seconds Berrini's life expectancy hovered at zero and then the barrel of the .45 drooped, lowered, and finally fell to the floor.

"Okay, kick it this way," Sommers said.

The gun slid across the floor. Not until it was safely under his foot, did Sommers draw an easy breath. It was no small thing to have talked down the hatred blazing in the eyes a tall, blond kid with a big S on his sweater.

Back at headquarters, Bruno Berrini made his confession. He hadn't meant to kill Cornell. Cornell had sought him out and insisted on one more demonstration ride. Not until they were under way did he reveal his knowledge of his brother Joe's use of him and demand information about his brother's association with Andy. They quarreled then, and Cornell pulled his gun. It was self defense, Berrini insisted. It was an accident. A guy has a right to defend himself, doesn't he? So the gun went off while he was struggling for it and killed a guy. It was self-defense. That was the story he would take into court, and whether or not he succeeded in selling it to a jury wasn't in Sommers' department. What was in his department, in his office, in fact, was a kid with a story to tell.

Andy Cornell was shaken and subdued.

"It was a crack Joe Berrini made the day after my father's funeral that made me suspicious," he admitted. "He was trying to be nice, I guess. 'Your old man had to have a lot of guts to put a .45 to his head,' he said. I got to thinking about it later. I even looked through all the old newspapers to

make sure, but nobody had mentioned that my dad's gun was a .45. I didn't know it myself until the police returned the gun to my mother and I got hold of it. Dad would never let me near it. Too many kids got killed playing with empty guns, he always said. But it was a .45 all right, and how did Joe know that unless he knew a lot more? Then I got to thinking about this Mr. Berra and how much the name sounded like Berrini. I knew my dad didn't like me hanging around with Joe because of his brother's record. I didn't see what that had to do with Joe, but it had worried him and so I got to thinking that maybe he'd had a fight with Bruno, or something. I knew Bruno was mixed up in what was going on at the grocery store across from the school. Kids know more about that kind of thing than cops, I guess. I just kept watching and waiting for my chance to talk to Bruno, which happened to be today."

"A talk with Bruno," Sommers repeated, "at the point of a gun." He was scowling when he said it. The kid might have been killed, taking that gun away from Bruno. "Haven't you Cornell's ever heard of going to the police?" he demanded.

Andy ducked his head. It was time for a lecture on the folly of a citizen taking the law into his own hands; but Andy Cornell had suddenly wilted, as if the excitement of his search for Bruno was all that had held back the grief of his father's death and now that barrier was gone. He would be remembering the warnings his father had given him about the Berrinis and picking up that burden, too. The kid had too much hard living ahead of him to be handicapped by additional crosses of guilt.

"Well, there's one thing I'll have to hand to you," Sommers admitted, having decided to forego the lecture. "You're not it any more than your father was."

Andy looked up, puzzled.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Chicken," Sommers said.

And now that you have finished reading Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, how did you like it? I should also be very pleased to receive your reactions to the stories in it. Write to me at 122 *East Forty-second Street, NY* 17, *NY.*

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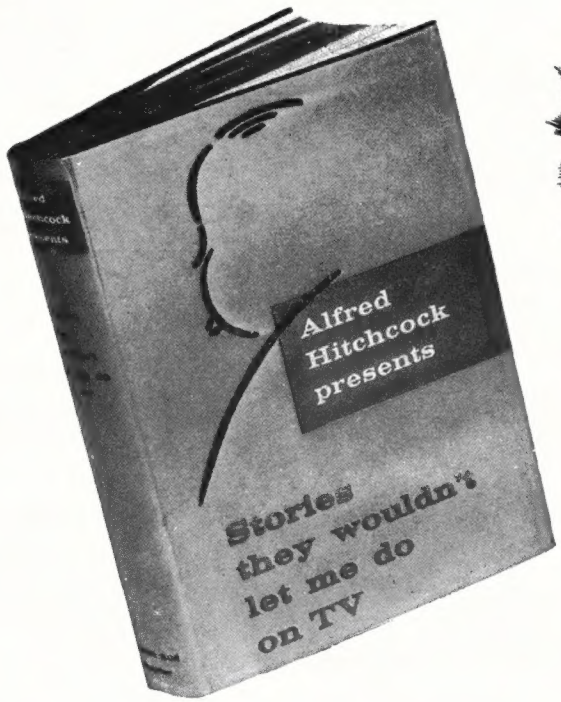

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